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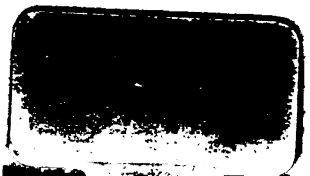

(Continued)

MENTAL DISCIPLINE;

OR,

HINTS

ON THE CULTIVATION OF

INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL HABITS:

ADDRESSED PARTICULARLY TO

STUDENTS IN THEOLOGY

AND

YOUNG PREACHERS.

BY

HENRY FORSTER BURDER, M. A.

ANDOVER:

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1827.

INTRODUCTION.

In every system of liberal education, there are two objects to be proposed and accomplished,—the communication of valuable knowledge, and the formation of those mental habits which may facilitate subsequent attainments. Of these two objects, the latter is indisputably the more important; although by many "it has been unfortunately forgotten, that the communication of truth is only one half of the business of education, and is not even the most important half." In this opinion, expressed by Dr. Barrow, Mr. Locke also concurs. "As it is in the body," observes this great philosopher, "so it is in the mind: practice makes it what it is; and most even of those excellencies which are looked on as natural endowments, will be found, when examined into more minutely, to be the product of exercise, and to be raised to that pitch by repeated actions." In another part of his Essay on the Conduct of the Human Understanding, he observes, to the same effect, that, "the faculties of the soul are improved and made useful to us, just after the same manner as our bodies are. Would you have a

man," he asks, "write or paint well, or perform any other mechanical operation dexterously and with ease; let him have ever so much vigour and activity, suppleness and address, yet nobody expects this from him, unless he has been used to it, and has employed time and pains in fashioning and forming his hand or other parts to these motions. Just so it is in the mind. Would you have a man reason well, you must use him to it betimes, exercise his mind in it, observing the connexion of ideas, and following them in train."

If then the cultivation of habits favourable to mental improvement be the most important object at which an instructor can aim in his plan of education, it is in a high degree desirable that he should adopt that mode of communicating knowledge to his pupils, by which their powers of mind may be excited to the most vigorous exercise, and subjected to the control of the most beneficial discipline.

In the course of the Author's Academic engagements, considerations relative to various points of mental discipline have been perpetually occurring to his mind, and have been very frequently suggested by him to his young friends and pupils, without being reduced to writing. He has, however, entertained the idea that an attempt to convey them in a form more explicit, connected and permanent, might not be unacceptable to them, and perhaps not altogether without benefit to others. He by no means imagines that the following pages embrace all the principles connected with the subject of Mental Discipline; he presents them to the reader simply as "*Hints*," with the hope that they will be found to comprehend those principles of Intellectual and Moral Improvement which may be justly deemed of the highest importance.

He is fully aware that a complete system of Mental

Discipline should commence with an inquiry into the powers of the mind, and should be pursued by the guidance of a philosophical analysis. This the Author has not neglected in his course of Academic Lectures, but, in the following pages, his object is merely to offer, in the most concise form, such advices as he deems of primary importance.

Perhaps some apology may be deemed necessary for the peculiar form in which the following Hints are conveyed. The Author has only to observe, that it is the style in which, without any undue assumption of authority or of importance, a Tutor may be supposed respectfully to address those whose intellectual progress he anxiously desires to facilitate. It is also a mode of address most favourable to conciseness and to clearness of expression. It may possibly be thought by some, who may honour these pages with a perusal, that conciseness has been too much studied, and that more extended illustrations would have rendered the Work more interesting and acceptable. On this point it may be sufficient to reply, that the object proposed is simply to present to the student those outlines, of which reading and reflection will, without difficulty, supply ample illustrations.

The class of Students for whose use the following Hints are particularly designed, is that of young men, either engaged in a course of study preparatory to the Christian Ministry, or desirous of still advancing in a career of mental improvement after they have actually entered on the duties of the Pastoral Office. The advices conveyed in the following pages are therefore distributed and arranged under three general divisions: the First, Hints to aid the cultivation of Mental Habits with a view to the *acquisition* of Knowledge, in a course of Preparato-

ry Study :—The Second, Hints to aid the cultivation of Mental Habits, with a view to the *communication* of Knowledge in the engagements of the Christian Ministry.—The Third, Hints to aid the cultivation of *Moral* Habits with a view to the successful discharge of Pastoral Duties.

CONTENTS.

PART I.

Page.

Cultivation of those intellectual habits which will facilitate the acquisition of knowledge . . . . . 7—28

1. Form a correct estimate of your own powers . . . 7
2. Regard study not only as it bears upon future pursuits, but as it promotes the improvement of the mind 9
3. Give an undivided and vigorous attention to every intellectual pursuit 12
4. Attain clear and precise ideas on every subject . . 14
5. Discriminate between sound and false reasoning . . 16
6. Acquire the habit of strict and diligent investigation 17
7. Use the assistance of others, but not so as to supersede your own efforts 19
8. Be desirous to have your defects pointed out . . . 20
9. Form a judicious plan of study, and prosecute it diligently 21
10. Guard against such mental habits as may be prejudicial 23
11. On all subjects aim to arrive at general principles . 26
12. Be able to express the result of your inquiries in your own words 27

PART II.

Page.

Cultivation of mental habits with a view of the communication of knowledge in the christian ministry . . 29—60

1. Importance of still pursuing plans of improvement after terminating the course of academic study . . 30
2. The course of study to be pursued in the earlier stages of the ministry 37
3. Best method of conducting direct preparation for the pulpit 44

PART III.

Cultivation of those moral habits which relate to the discharge of pastoral duties 61

1. Reflect on the importance of personal religion . . . 61
2. Aim at purity of motive 63
3. Repress feelings of vanity and pride 65
4. Make the grand points in religion prominent in your discourses 68
5. Aim at seriousness and earnestness of manner . . 70
6. Let a deep sense of responsibility secure fidelity . . 73
7. Discriminate between the two great classes of characters 74
8. Make pointed appeals to the heart and conscience . 76
9. Do not aim unsuitably at originality 78
10. Study the best way of access to the heart 81
11. Derive benefit to yourselves from the subject on which you are about to preach 83

Page.

12. Attach due importance to the devotional parts of public worship 85
13. Desire and expect success 87
14. Depend on the influence of the Spirit 89
15. Adopt the best methods of conveying religious instruction to the young 92
16. Regulate on just principles the time devoted to pastoral visits 94
17. Cultivate spirituality of mind 98
18. Cultivate zeal for the interests of religion at home and abroad 100
19. Propose the character of Paul as your model . . . 102
20. Guard against a party spirit 105
21. Do full justice to other ministers 107
22. Limit your pursuits in literature and science . . 109
23. Let not public engagements detract from private devotion 111
24. Guard against levity 113
25. Cherish the strictest purity 115
26. Cultivate a delicate sense of honor 116
27. Remember the importance of discretion 119
28. Be courteous 121
29. Be punctual 123
30. Do not hastily abandon a station of usefulness . . 124

MENTAL DISCIPLINE.

PART I.

HINTS WITH A VIEW TO AID THE CULTIVATION OF THOSE INTELLECTUAL HABITS WHICH WILL BEST FACILITATE THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE.

I.

Endeavour to form a correct estimate of your own powers.

Every individual has been accustomed to form some estimate of his own talents. His opinion may have been formed in very early life, and may have been modified by frequent comparisons between himself and his associates, as well as by the commendations and animadversions of his superiors. But this estimate may be exceedingly incorrect. It may be by far too favourable; or it may be by far too unfavourable. In either case the influence will be prejudicial.

If the estimate be *too favourable*, not a few evils may be generated, of which the tendency will be to obstruct intellectual progress.

It may be expected to produce that pride and self-complacency which will conceal from the individual the defects of his capacities and his attainments, enfeeble the stimulus to exertion, and render him impatient, if not indignant, when deficiencies are exposed of which he was not aware, and errors which he is not prepared to acknowledge.

It may also induce a person to enter prematurely on a species of intellectual effort to which his mental energy is inadequate. "Though the faculties of the mind are improved by exercise," observes Mr. Locke, "yet they must not be put to a stress beyond their strength. *Quid valeant humeri, quid ferre recusent*, must be made the measure of every one's understanding, who has a desire, not only to perform well, but to keep up the vigour of his faculties. The mind by being engaged in a task beyond its strength, like the body, strained by lifting at a weight too heavy, has often its force broken, and thereby gets an unaptness, or an aversion, to any vigorous attempt ever after. The understanding should be brought to the difficult and knotty parts of knowledge, that try the strength of thought, and a full bent of the mind, by insensible degrees."

If the estimate which any one has formed of his own talents be *too unfavourable*, the *moral* effect may indeed be advantageous by the excitement of humility and modesty, yet it may be unfriendly to *intellectual* progress, by depressing the mind, and discouraging those efforts which might be made with success. Many pursuits appear on a distant and indistinct survey to be environed by insurmountable obstacles, whereas on a nearer approach the difficulties become less formidable,

and soon entirely disappear. Many of the early attempts which mental discipline prescribes, are onerous and irksome to those who are only beginning to cultivate habits of intellectual exertion; and the minds of some who are not deficient in ability may be ready to shrink from a task, to which they imagine themselves unequal. Let them guard against such an estimate of their own powers as would discourage vigorous exertion, and impede the march of intellect, of which it may be said with undoubting confidence, "*vires acquirit eundo.*"

II.

Attach importance to the various branches of study prescribed, not only as they may appear directly to bear upon the pursuits of future life, but also as they tend to promote the discipline and improvement of the mind.

From the limited powers of the human mind and the restricted time which is usually devoted to intellectual culture, it is important that a selection of objects should be judiciously made from the numerous pursuits of literature and of science. That such a selection should be made with a distinct reference to the engagements of future life, it is readily conceded; but with a view to ultimate success, those engagements should be, in the order of time, a secondary, and by no means a primary, object of attention. In a liberal education there is much which is preliminary. No superstructure should be attempted till the basis be rendered broad and firm. The first object of solicitude should be to give vigour and expansion to the faculties of the mind, and whatever pursuits are best adapted to secure this

end should be selected by the instructor; and, by the learner, should be regarded with interest, and prosecuted with ardour. Let him not imagine they are of inferior importance, because he cannot discern any direct connexion with the leading object of his professional career. Let him rather inquire into their tendency to subject his mind to a salutary discipline, and to form those habits of thought and study, by which his future progress may be directed and facilitated. The Student in theology, for example, may perhaps entertain doubts with regard to the utility of studies in *Mathematics*, or in *the Philosophy of the human mind;* yet it is not difficult to exhibit the direct and powerful tendency of these pursuits to generate habits of incalculable value to those who, in the discharge of their professional engagements will find occasion for the exercise of accurate discrimination, and the power of conclusive reasoning. Could it even be shewn, that the researches of Mathematical Science and of Mental Philosophy, would impart but little information of real value, still it might be contended, that the advantages accruing from the very efforts of intellectual energy which they call forth, must secure, to the student, an ample remuneration for his expenditure of time, and to the tutor, a full justification of the course prescribed.

Such was the importance attached to *Mathematical* studies by that able reasoner, the late Bishop Watson, that he regarded an initiation into the processes of Geometrical Demonstration as incalculably advantageous in promoting mental discipline. He stated it to be his deliberate opinion that were the attention restricted even to the first book of Euclid's Elements, a familiar

acquaintance with its reasonings could not fail to render substantial benefit to the mind of the learner.

In recommending a vigorous application of the mind to the solution of a question of difficulty in *Intellectual Philosophy*, the late distinguished Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh thus urged and encouraged the efforts of the Students:

"In some former *severe* discussions like the present I endeavoured to extract for you some little consolation, from that very fortitude of attention which the discussion required,—pointing out to you the advantage of questions of this kind, in training the mind to those habits of serious thought and patient investigation, which, considered in their primary relation to the intellectual character, are of infinitely greater importance than the instruction which the question itself may afford. '*Generosos animos labor nutrit.*' In the discipline of reason, as in the training of the Athletæ, it is not for a single victory, which it may give to the youthful champion, that the combat is to be valued, but for that knitting of the joints, and hardening of the muscles,—that quickness of eyes and collectedness of effort, which it is forming, for the struggles of more illustrious fields."*

* Dr. Thos. Brown's Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

III.

Apply the mind with full vigour and undivided attention to every intellectual pursuit in which you engage.

In the entrance on a course of mental discipline, the effort to fix the attention for any length of time on the object of study is found to be difficult, if not irksome. Ideas which would divert the mind into a different train of thought are suggested, either by external circumstances, or by the subject under consideration, and as many of these ideas may be more interesting, as well as more familiar to the mind, they are not repressed without difficulty, and they still recur after reiterated efforts of exclusion. This state of mind induces much more painful fatigue than the most vigorous efforts of attention, especially as it is associated with the feelings of dissatisfaction and regret. In this case, to use the words of Mr. Stewart, " it is not an exclusive and steady attention that we give to the object, but we are losing sight of it, and recurring to it every instant; and the painful efforts of which we are conscious, are not (as we are apt to suppose them to be) efforts of uncommon attention, but unsuccessful attempts to keep the mind steady to its object, and to exclude the extraneous ideas which are from time to time soliciting its notice."

In proportion to the facility of repelling the intrusion of these extraneous ideas, and of directing a fixed attention to the object of study, the mind is prepared for success in the operations of intellect. There is even reason to attribute mental superiority in no small degree to the possession of an habitual power of controul over

the train of thought which occupies the mind; and to this power of attention, we are informed, Sir Isaac Newton himself ascribed his loftiest attainments in science.

Let then the mind of the Student be deeply impressed with a conviction of the importance of this habit, and of the practicability of making great and indefinite progress in acquiring the power of fixed attention. Let him resolve that he will daily make the most vigorous efforts; that he will summon the full energy of his mind, whenever he is engaged in study; and that he will never tolerate in himself a habit of languid and intermitting application. Let him be assured, that if ever he allow this, he not only loses his time, and frustrates his immediate object, but that he injures the tone and impairs the vigour of his mind. "When you remit your attention," said Epictetus, "do not fancy you can recover it when you please, but remember that by the fault of to-day, you will be in a worse state to-morrow, and a habit of not attending is induced. Why should you not preserve a constant attention? there is no concern of life in which attention is not required."

In order successfully to cultivate the power of attention, we must endeavour to combine energy and tranquillity. There should be, as much as possible, freedom from all that disturbs; and then a full excitement and continued effort of intellectual energy. The effort may be difficult, and the success imperfect; but, beyond all doubt, the difficulty will diminish, the success will be progressive, and the attainment, even in a limited degree, will be an ample remuneration for strenuous

and persevering exertions. "What should we have thought of the competitor of the Olympic course (asks Dr. Thomas Brown, in an animated address to his students) whose object was the glory of a prize,—if, with that illustrious reward before him—with strength and agility that might ensure him the possession of it—and with all the assembled multitudes of Greece to witness his triumph, he had turned away from the contest, and from victory, because he was not to tread on softness, and to be refreshed with fragrance, as he moved along! In that knowledge which awaits your studies, in the various sciences to which your attention may be turned, *you* have a *much nobler prize* before you; and therefore I shall not hesitate to call forth, occasionally, all the vigour of your attention, at the risk of a little temporary fatigue as often as it shall appear to me, that by exciting you to more than ordinary intellectual activity, I can facilitate your acquisition of a reward, which the listless exertions of the indolent never can obtain, and which is as truly the prize of strenuous effort, as the Palms of the Circus or the Course."*

IV.

Uniformly endeavour to attain clear and precise ideas on every subject of investigation, and never allow indistinctness and confusion of thought to remain in the mind, without a determined effort to arrive at discriminating and accurate conceptions.

A disposition to rest satisfied with obscure and in-

* Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

definite notions, on subjects within the limits of our knowledge, is at once an indication of the want of mental vigour, and a most formidable barrier in the way of intellectual improvement. On the other hand, a dissatisfaction with imperfect and half-formed conceptions is a most powerful stimulus to further inquiry, and an effectual preservative from the error of taking for granted, that we already know that of which we are, in truth, only beginning to perceive our ignorance. "The greatest part of true knowledge," observes Mr. Locke, "lies in a distinct perception of things in themselves distinct. And some men give more clear light and knowledge, by the bare, distinct stating of a question, than others by talking of it in gross, whole hours together. In this, they who so state a question, do no more, but separate and disentangle the parts of it, one from another, and lay them, when so disentangled, in their due order. This often, without any more ado, resolves the doubt, and shews the mind where the truth lies. In learning any thing, as little should be proposed to the mind at once as possible; and that being understood, and fully mastered, proceed to the next adjoining part, yet unknown, simple, unperplexed proposition, belonging to the matter in hand, and tending to the clearing what is principally designed."

Whether our immediate object be to arrive at clear conceptions in our own train of thought, or to convey our ideas with clearness to others, it is of the greatest importance, to study precision in the use of *language*. It is by the aid of language that we carry on our processes of thought; and unless we accustom ourselves to

accurate definitions and distinctions, our notions must be obscure, our reasonings perplexed, and our conclusions frequently erroneous. We often impose upon ourselves by falsely imagining that we sufficiently understand a subject, because we are familiar with many of the comprehensive terms in which that subject is usually discussed, whereas to many of those terms we may never have attached any precise or definite ideas.

V.

Endeavour carefully to discriminate between sound and false reasoning; that you may readily detect, and never employ, arguments wanting in solidity.

The intermixture of arguments which are weak and inconclusive with such as are strong and irresistible, has often been subservient to the interests of sophistry; and to the undiscerning, this has made "the worse appear the better reason." But if this has frequently been practised, with express design, by the advocate of error, it has also been sometimes practised, without design, by the defender of truth. It has too often been forgotten, that *arguments are to be weighed, not numbered;* and that, in truth, a weak, a doubtful, or an inconclusive argument, has the effect of diminishing the force of those which are undeniably strong. It excites in the mind suspicion, both as to the talents of the reasoner and the accuracy of his opinions. In short it has the same effect in the process of moral reasoning as a *negative quantity* in the solution of *algebraic problems*. It effects a diminution of value to the full amount of the quantity which it represents.

In the conduct of life, and certainly in every professional career, it is of still greater importance to exercise a sound and discriminating judgment, than even to have at command ample stores of literature and science. A lesson of no inconsiderable value should be learned from the example of those writers (and they are not few in number) whose memory has been much more successfully cultivated than their judgment; who excite admiration at the rich and varied treasures of their knowledge, without inspiring respect for their opinions, or confidence in their reasonings; who can, with apparent facility, borrow illustrations and embellishments from almost every department of science, but employ them in aid of opinions formed with incautious haste, supported by fallacious arguments, and maintained with all the confidence of dogmatism.

VI.

Endeavour to acquire the habit of strict and diligent investigation.

"To investigate, in the original sense of the word, is to search for an unknown object by discovering and following out the traces which it has left, in the path which leads to its unknown situation. Thus we find where a person is concealed, by tracing his footsteps from the place whence he set out." In the investigation of truth, we set out from a point which is already ascertained, with a view to our arrival at a point not yet ascertained. But this progress is not to be effected by plans arbitrary or capricious. Our steps must be di-

rected, and our efforts must be guided, by certain principles of inquiry and research. There is a certain process of thought,—an unbroken series of causes and consequences, by which alone we can pass from that which is known to that which is unknown. If any of the links of that chain be disjoined, or rather if they be not clearly discovered, the interval may indeed be supplied by conjecture, but the investigation is incomplete. Now the true spirit of investigation, and a facility in pursuing the requisite inquiries, are not of easy acquisition. They are the result of frequent efforts and judicious discipline. But the value of the attainment is an ample compensation for the labour which it demands. The habit acquired is applicable to all the objects which are placed within the grasp of the human faculties. It is equally requisite, and equally beneficial, in the investigation of individual character, of historic facts, of the phenomena of matter and of mind, and of the still more interesting and momentous truths which constitute the system of divine revelation.

This habit of careful investigation will exert a salutary influence on the intellectual character, in producing a manly independence of mind. He who has been accustomed to examine for himself, will not be disposed to rely implicitly on the opinion of others, or to surrender his judgment at the demand of opinionative dogmatism. While he will gratefully receive and acknowledge the aid of others, in correcting his opinions and extending his views, he will be in no danger of resembling those "who resign their judgment to the last man they hear or read; who, cameleon-like, take

the colour of what is laid before them, and as soon lose and resign it to the next that happens to come in their way.

VII.

Avail yourselves of the assistance of others, whether tutors, associates, or authors, only so far as to obtain the aid actually requisite, and not to supersede the utmost efforts of your own minds.

The question perpetually arising in the mind of the student of remiss and indolent habits is—How shall I facilitate my labour by obtaining assistance from others? The question equally familiar to the mind of the student athirst for knowledge, and willing to acquire it at the expense of strenuous exertion is—How shall I accomplish my object with the *least* assistance from others? It is not difficult to predict the tendency and result of either habit of mind. By the one, the intellectual character is degraded and enfeebled; by the other, it attains dignity and elevation, energy and self-command. He who always does his best will usually do well, and often more than well; and if he fail occasionally to accomplish his object, his failure will neither be accompanied by self-reproach, nor followed by a relaxation of effort. The assistance which is within his reach he will resolutely decline, till his best energies have been put forth: he has been initiated into the habit of applying himself to grapple with a difficulty: a difficulty which appeared formidable when viewed at a distance, with only a transient glance, has often been

conquered by the first encounter; and in a better cause than that on which the exclamation was first made, he has been prepared to say "*veni, vidi, vici.*" Or if a vigorous, patient, and persevering investigation was requisite, he has at length entered into the recompense of him who expressed the delight of no ordinary mind, when he exclaimed *εὕρηκα.*

VIII.

Be not only willing, but desirous, to have every defect in your powers, attainments, and productions, fully and explicitly pointed out.

The disclosure may be unwelcome; it may be even unexpected; but it will be salutary. It may be conducive to the interests as well of intellectual as of moral culture. A capacity which appears contracted may be further developed, may be greatly expanded: attainments which at present disappoint expectation may be considerably augmented; and the productions which may justly be regarded as unfavourable specimens of intellectual effort, may supply materials of comparison with future exercises, from which may be derived the most cheering encouragement.

It is one of the many advantages arising from association with other students in a public seminary, that such defects are rendered apparent to the individuals by whom they are displayed. The cultivation of the understanding may doubtless be carried on in the absence of living instructors, and without associates in study. Books may supply, in part, the want of tutors,

and plodding diligence may amass stores of knowledge in the deepest seclusion; but then the means are wanting, not only of abridging unnecessary labour, and removing formidable obstructions, but also of detecting those defects of knowledge, those prejudices of early education, those mistaken notions, those injurious habits, those numerous errors and blemishes of performance, which might never have become apparent to the individuals themselves.

To receive with docility and with gratitude the exposure of our own defects and mistakes is an attainment of no small value. It has a beneficial influence in restraining us from thinking more highly of our talents and of our productions than we ought to think, and it renders even the detection of our defects an excitement to intellectual progress, and a means of moral improvement.

IX.

Let your plan of study, and the arrangement for the distribution of your time, be judiciously formed, and prosecuted with the utmost diligence and punctuality.

The beneficial effect of order and regularity in the discharge of engagements, especially when a variety of objects may demand attention, must be in some degree apparent to every one. To the student, not less than to the man of business, is regularity of method important in the arrangement of his pursuits; as it prevents loss of time by embarrassing suspense, with regard to the object which at any given hour, claims im-

mediate attention. Even a plan of arrangement, in some respects defective and objectionable, would secure to a student a decided advantage over another individual, who should disregard order and method: incalculable then must be the benefit arising from regulations, which proceed on wise and enlightened principles. A few suggestions on this point may be deserving of notice.

1. Let not the plan laid down be so difficult of observance as to incur the danger of frequent failure or irregularity.

It is wise for us to consider, not only what we could *wish* to accomplish, but also what it is *probable* that, with our habits, and in our circumstances, we shall be *able* to effect. By attempting too much, we often accomplish less than we should have effected, with plans guided by principles of greater moderation; and one reason which may be assigned for this is, that after having repeatedly fallen short of the line prescribed, our plans cease to have authority in our own estimation, lose their practical influence on the distribution of our time, and having thus been *virtually*, they are at length *avowedly* abandoned.

2. Let the proportion of time and attention devoted to every object of study be regulated by a regard, both to its *real* and to its *relative* importance.

3. Let the most important studies be assigned to those hours in which we find, by experience, that we can exert our intellectual energies with the greatest facility and intensity.

X.

Guard against those mental habits which may be eventually though imperceptibly prejudicial, by impairing the vigour of the mind or of the body.

Of these several may be distinctly specified :—

1. Undue continuance of studious exertion and mental excitement.

The opinion has been publicly expressed by a Professor of eminence in a northern University, that no man can habitually apply his mind to *intense study* during more than six hours in the day without injury to his health. This opinion, be it remembered, applies to the determined energy of mental application in severe study ; and if to six hours of serious study be added three or four hours of such reading as conveys instruction, without inducing any consciousness of fatigue, the student will have made near approaches to that line beyond which to trespass is compatible neither with safety nor with duty.

Let not the young and ardent adventurer in the path of knowledge imagine, that, by the omission of the hours due to sleep, and to bodily exercise, he can be a gainer upon the whole. How many distressing instances have there been in which it has too plainly appeared, that undue exertion and excitement have undermined even a vigorous constitution, and disqualified for the performance of those duties for which a course of study is the intended preparation. And should these fearful evils not be entailed, still it may be

shewn, that undue application defeats the object in view and proceeds upon principles of calculation altogether erroneous. In all intellectual as well as in mechanical labours, the work accomplished must be in proportion to the *power* exerted. But the power which the mind can put forth in any study, depends upon a variety of circumstances; among which are to be included, its freedom from exhaustion and depression, and from those disabilities to which it will be subject, if the health and spirits be impaired. No hesitation can there be in hazarding the assertion, that in the experiment of a month or a year, it will be found, that the student will actually accomplish more of intellectual labour, by eight hours of daily study, with two hours of bodily exercise and recreation, than he could effect in ten hours without such intermission.

2. An undue eagerness of desire to complete any performance within a given time.

The tranquil exercise of thought may be carried on with energy for a considerable time, without inducing mental weariness or occasioning effects injurious to health. Very different, however, are the effects of study, when pursued with any degree of anxiety or perturbation, and especially when accompanied with a restless and impatient eagerness to complete the performance, or to accomplish, in a given time, a certain task which we have prescribed. There are, indeed, minds habitually inclined to indolence or to procrastination, which derive benefit from the stimulus arising from such a requirement; but when the stimulus arising from other considerations is sufficiently powerful, that additional excite-

ment may become highly injurious. They who feel the pressure of numerous engagements are frequently too eager to complete the literary labour in which they are employed, before they proceed to another pursuit, to which either the plan of study or the call of duty may require their immediate attention; and the hurried attempt will either, by undue despatch, be unfavourable to the performance itself, or by the disquieting anxiety induced, be injurious to the corporeal frame. It is related of Mr. John Wesley, that when a reference, on one occasion, was made to his numerous avocations, he replied,—"Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry, because I never undertake more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit."——

3. An inability to transfer the attention with ease from one subject to another; or, when it is desirable, to unbend and recreate the mind.

The love of variety, of novelty, and of relief from continued efforts of thought, renders it easy for the undisciplined mind to dismiss from its notice a subject to which its attention has been directed. But in proportion as habits of fixed and persevering attention are cultivated, and feelings of interest in the pursuit of knowledge are awakened, it becomes difficult to disengage the mind, at pleasure, from any subject of consideration. Yet this want of control over the thoughts and energies of the mind is at once unfavourable to progress in knowledge, to the enjoyment of the pleasures of social intercourse, and to that entire recreation of mind by which it is prepared to renew, with increased ener-

gy, its application to severe study. It is most desirable, for reasons sufficiently obvious, to cultivate vivacity and cheerfulness of disposition; and, in order to this, it is of no small importance to be able to withdraw the mind, at pleasure, from pursuits which, by their continuance, occasion fatigue and abstraction, and to yield to the full impression of surrounding objects or of enlivening conversation.

XI.

Let it be your constant aim to arrive at general principles, on all the subjects to which your attention is directed.

Without the guidance of general principles, the human mind resembles a vessel at sea, without chart, or compass, or pilot. It must fluctuate in doubt and uncertainty; and amidst the agitations of conflicting sentiments, it must be at the mercy of almost every wind of opinion, and unprepared to encounter the rising wave of opposition. In every department of human knowledge, whether of literature or of science, whether of reason or of revelation, there are certain fixed principles—certain general truths, from which we must set out in our researches, and by which we must be guided in our reasonings. To borrow the language of Mr. Locke, "there are fundamental truths that lie at the bottom, the basis upon which a great many others rest, and in which they have their consistency. These are teeming truths, rich in store, with which they furnish the mind, and, like the lights of heaven,

are not only beautiful and entertaining in themselves, but give light and evidence to other things, that, without them, could not be seen or known. Such is that admirable discovery of Newton, that all bodies gravitate to one another, which may be counted the basis of natural philosophy. Our Saviour's great rule—'that we should love our neighbour as ourselves,' is such a fundamental truth, for the regulating human society, that, I think, by that alone, one might, without difficulty, determine all the cases and doubts in social morality. These, and such as these, are the truths we should endeavour to find out and store our minds with." ——"We should accustom ourselves, in any question proposed, to examine and find out upon what it bottoms. Most of the difficulties that come in our way, when well considered and traced, lead us to some proposition which, known to be true, clears the doubt, and gives an easy solution of the question."

XII.

Be not satisfied with the knowledge you have acquired on any subject of investigation till you can express the result of your inquiries and reflections in your own words, either in conversation or in writing.

The attempt to convey our ideas to others is the most satisfactory test by which we may ascertain their correctness or inaccuracy—their completeness or deficiency. Nothing is more common than for those whose minds are undisciplined, to flatter themselves that they have a competent acquaintance with a subject, on which

their ideas are still obscure and confused, and on which they betray obscurity, and confusion, as soon as they attempt the communication of their thoughts to others. It is therefore of great importance in seminaries of education, that an adequate test should be applied by the tutor, throughout the whole progress of study, both by instituting a strict examination on the course of reading prescribed, and by requiring frequent exercises in composition on the subjects to which attention has been directed. On the same principle it would be found highly beneficial, were those who are associated in a studious career, to bring each other to the test by mutual examination, and by conversing freely on points of importance and of difficulty. It would be too much to assert, that in every instance where there is clearness of conception, there will be facility of expression, since there may be causes of embarrassment in the attempt to convey ideas, which do not arise from the obscurity of the ideas themselves; but where no such causes are in operation, it may be presumed, that confusion of language has its origin in confusion of thought, and that we ought not to give ourselves credit for a competent acquaintance with any subject, till we can convey our ideas on that subject with precision and perspicuity.

PART II.

"THE Improvement of the Understanding," observes Mr. Locke, "is for two ends; first, for our own increase of knowledge; secondly, to enable us to deliver that knowledge to others. The latter of these, if it be not the chief end of study in a gentleman; yet it is at least equal to the other, since the greatest part of his business and usefulness in the world is by the influence of what he says, or writes to others."

Now if even to those who are not engaged in any department of professional life, it be so important to acquire a facility in the communication of knowledge, how much more important must be that attainment to those, whose official duty it is, to convey to the minds of men, in various classes of society, knowledge of incomparable value.

I proceed, then, to that which was announced as the SECOND PART of my design—to offer

HINTS TO AID THE CULTIVATION OF MENTAL HABITS, WITH A VIEW TO THE COMMUNICATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ENGAGEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

FOR the sake of convenient arrangement, I shall distribute the advices I have to suggest under three general divisions:

I shall endeavour to exhibit—The Importance of still pursuing with diligence Plans of Mental Improvement, after terminating the Course of Academic Discipline: The Course of Study which it is most important to pursue in the earlier stages of the Christian Ministry:—and, The best Method of conducting direct Preparations for the Pulpit.

I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STILL PURSUING WITH DILIGENCE PLANS OF MENTAL IMPROVEMENT AFTER TERMINATING THE COURSE OF ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE.

1. *It would be absurd for a student to imagine, that on quitting the College, and entering on the active duties of the Christian Ministry, he has "finished his studies," when in truth they are but commenced.*

The foundation only is laid—the superstructure you have yet to rear. Only the elements of knowledge have you at present attained: let these first principles stimulate, not satisfy, your desire of knowledge; let them guide, not limit your researches. You have in some degree *acquired*, but you have not yet *matured* the intellectual habits essential to the due discharge of the office on which you now enter. You are now arrived at a critical period in the history of your mind. It is now to be determined, whether, in respect of mental energy and attainments, you are to remain stationary with self-reproach and merited disgrace, or to prosecute, with ardour, a course of unremitted application and honourable proficiency.

Can you hesitate to admit the necessity of blending the character of the Student with that of the Minister? Are you prepared to specify the branches of academic study in which you have already arrived at a competency of knowledge? Let it even be granted, that in some of your literary and scientific pursuits you have attained a proficiency, at once respectable and valuable; and let it be conceded, that further advances in some of these studies can scarcely be regarded as compatible with the avocations on which you now enter. Still, must you not be compelled to acknowledge, that there are other studies of primary importance, in which, with your advantages, it would be culpable not to make strenuous and habitual exertions, with a view to further progress. How powerful are the considerations which urge you to the diligent investigation of the sacred Scriptures—to the constant study of the languages in which they were originally written—and, to the accumulation, from various sources, of that knowledge by which they may be explained, illustrated, and defended.

II. *The importance of the object at which the Christian Ministry aims, peremptorily requires the most strenuous and diligent improvement of the mental powers.*

"How high and awful a function is that which proposes to establish in the soul an interior dominion—to illuminate its powers by a celestial light—and introduce it to an intimate, ineffable, and unchanging alliance with the Father of Spirits. The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the Christian Ministry, our right arm is withered; nothing but imbecility and relax-

ation remains. For no man ever excelled in a profession to which he did not feel an attachment bordering on enthusiasm; though what in other professions is enthusiasm, is, in ours, the dictate of sobriety and truth."*

They who enter on this arduous and responsible office are understood to give, and usually give in terms the most explicit, and with assurances the most solemn, a pledge, that they will devote to its momentous labours their best talents and their assiduous exertions. Nothing less than this is due to the God whom we serve, the cause in which we have embarked, and the individuals who attach themselves to our Ministry. If the pledge be given, and the obligation be sacred, conscience is deeply concerned in endeavouring to redeem it with inviolable fidelity and constancy. There may be, on the part of some, a facility in the discharge of public duties, arising from talents of a superior order, or at least of a peculiar adaptation to certain engagements; but this by no means exonerates them, even in the slightest degree, from the duty of improving by unremitted diligence the talents they possess. If to them more be given, of them more will be required.

III. *The difficulties which are to be encountered in the discharge of the Christian Ministry require the most vigorous exertions, and the most diligent application.*

The difficulties to which I refer are of an intellectual kind, and arise especially from three sources:

1.) *The diversity of mental character prevailing in the auditories we address.*

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* Sermon on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Ministry, by the Rev. Robert Hall.

It is the just remark of Dr. Campbell, in his Philosophy of Rhetoric, that "the more mixed the auditory is, the greater is the difficulty of speaking to them with effect. The preacher has therefore a more delicate part to perform than either the pleader or the senator. The auditors though rarely so accomplished as to require the same accuracy of composition, or acuteness in reasoning as may be expected in the other two, are more various in age, rank, taste, inclinations, sentiments and prejudices." "To men of various casts and complexions, it is obvious," observes Mr. Hall, "a corresponding difference in the selection of topics and the method of appeal is requisite. Some are only capable of digesting the first principles of religion, on whom it is necessary often to inculcate the same lessons, with the reiteration of parental solicitude: there are others of a wider grasp of comprehension, who must be indulged with an ampler variety, and to whom views of religion less obvious, less obtrusive, and demanding a more vigorous exercise of the understanding, are peculiarly adapted. Some are accustomed to contemplate every subject in a light so cool and argumentative, that they are not easily impressed with any thing which is not presented in the garb of reasoning;—there are others of a softer temperament, who are more easily won by tender strokes of pathos."*

After such quotations, it is assuredly sufficient simply to ask the question, whether any preacher, and especially any young preacher, can imagine himself qual-

* Sermon before cited.

ified to contend with difficulties so formidable, without habits of studious consideration and deep reflection?

2.) *The weighty and frequent demands made upon the mental resources of a Christian minister in the present day.*

In the discharge of his stated duties on the Sabbath, and of the frequent engagements which arise out of the excitement of benevolent activity in the present day, how heavy are the demands upon the time and talents and attainments of the Christian minister! With a limited degree of opportunity for preparation, on what a variety of subjects he has to discourse,—what a versatility of thought he has occasion to display. How much he needs an ample store of general principles, on almost all subjects interesting to the heart of man —well digested views of the whole system of revealed truth—familiarity with the most important points of Biblical Criticism—and materials derived from almost all the sources of human knowledge, in order to present to his hearers, rich and diversified and interesting materials of illustration, to whatever subjects he invites their regard. Surely qualifications for such engagements are not to be expected without extensive reading and perpetual application.

3.) *The increased circulation of knowledge both literary and scientific among various classes of society.*

It is naturally expected, that a Minister should be superior to most of his hearers, not only in his knowledge of the Scriptures, but also in mental culture and literary attainments. To secure, by a wide interval,

that superiority, was formerly by no means difficult for those Ministers who had enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education. In the present day, this is not so easy a task. In most congregations there are not a few who have been versed in the principles of literature and of science, and who are qualified to detect inaccuracies of thought or expression, which might formerly have passed without notice. It should be deeply impressed upon the mind of every Minister, when he embarks on his professional course, that as the standard of information among all classes is perpetually rising, the standard of learning and of talent among the Ministers of the Gospel must be raised at least in an equal degree.

IV. *The importance of unwearied assiduity in a course of mental improvement, is evinced by the contrast observable between different classes of Christian Ministers.*

From the observations, and inquiries I have made, in reference to the plans pursued by young Ministers after terminating their academic career, I have been disposed to regard them as forming two distinct classes, the one class consisting of those who, by a course of mental discipline, are making every year progressive and obvious advances in their qualifications for public usefulness—the other class consisting of those who, year after year, exhibit the same unvarying complexion of intellectual character, without any perceptible progress in comprehension of mind, power of thought, or extent of knowledge. Their resources appear to be exhausted; their sermons, instead of presenting to their

hearers, "things new and old," reiterate ideas perfectly familiar, in forms of expression which may be almost anticipated. It is scarcely necessary to add, that, under such ministrations, but little interest is excited, but little impression is produced. Indolence on the part of the minister induces torpor on the part of the hearers; or if on their part stronger feelings are excited, they are emotions of painful regret and growing dissatisfaction.

On the other hand, the diligent student, guided by the noblest principles, and impelled by the strongest motives, is constantly adding to his stores of knowledge and his facilities for the discharge of professional duties. If his direct preparation for the pulpit, rendered easier by the power of habit and the augmentation of his materials of thought demand a less proportion of his time, he by no means contracts, within narrower limits, the efforts of his mind, but delights in the opportunity afforded for the accumulation of the most important knowledge. By diligently pursuing this course, he must be necessarily increasing his ministerial qualifications, and rising in the estimation of the people of his charge.

I now proceed to offer some advices,

II.

ON THE COURSE OF STUDY, WITH A VIEW TO MENTAL IMPROVEMENT, WHICH IT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO PURSUE, IN THE EARLIER STAGES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

Shall I render myself liable to the charge of indulging unfounded and illiberal suspicions, with regard to any of my brethren, if I venture to express a fear, that some allow too much of their valuable time to be frittered away in the perusal of miscellaneous and periodical publications? These, judiciously selected, may afford interesting and advantageous occupation for hours of leisure, and intervals of relaxation from serious study; but on these the student should not think himself authorized to enter, till by *hours* of *application* he has intitled himself to *moments* of *leisure*. Incalculable and irretrievable will be the loss he will sustain, if he allow his mornings and his evenings to be expended in the perusal of light and ephemeral productions. By no means would I discourage an attention, duly limited and regulated to the various departments of polite literature. From works of taste and imagination, carefully selected, the mind may reap not delight only but improvement. Poetry, eloquence, and criticism have their *claims* as well as their *attractions;* but let the student yield to their attractions only in proportion to their claims, and let their claims be submitted to the decision of an enlightened judgment and a conscience feelingly alive.

The *first* object which claims the attention of a student and a minister, in his course of reading, is *the study of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures.* Whatever may be the limits within which multiplied engagements may require this to be contracted, let it be a part of the business of every day. In your academic efforts it may be presumed, you have at least conquered the most formidable difficulties in the acquisition of these languages. How much to be lamented would it be, should you suspend your application, just at the point at which you were about to receive the recompense of your toilsome initiation. If you make no further progress, your past labour will be productive of but little advantage; and if you neglect the frequent and habitual reading of the Scriptures in the original, you will lose much of that which you have already acquired. Surely you ought not to be satisfied without attaining a facility in reading the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Testament—such a facility as will remove all temptations to neglect the study—as will render it easy to avail yourselves of the critical labours of others—as will authorize you to place some confidence in your own opinion on points on which critics and commentators disagree—and will render the perusal of the Scriptures in the original sufficiently easy, to be adopted with advantage for the purposes of devotional improvement.

A *second* course of reading on which I would lay stress, is one of which the leading object should be *the extension of those branches of knowledge, for which a demand is chiefly made in the exercise of your official functions.*

If the senator should be well versed in the history of his country, its constitution, and the sources of national prosperity; if the lawyer should be intimately conversant with the system of jurisprudence and the enactments of the legislature; if the physician should be well skilled in the knowledge of diseases and the remedies which they require; surely a minister of religion should be equally solicitous to attain an extensive and accurate acquaintance with that system of truth which it is the business of his life to teach and to inculcate. On a great variety of subjects his knowledge must of necessity be superficial; but on those in which he undertakes to appear in the character of a public instructor, his knowledge should be accurate, if not profound. With this view, the energy of his mind should be directed to the study of the volume of revelation; nor can he be deemed excusable unless he avail himself, to the full extent of his means and opportunities, of those aids which are so abundantly supplied, both by ancient and modern writers. A specification of the writers which especially merit attention falls not within the compass of my present design. Suffice it to say, that those which are of principal importance may be included under the heads of Biblical Criticism—Theology, Polemical and Practical—Jewish Antiquities—Ecclesiastical History—and Works illustrative of Oriental Usages and Scriptural Allusions. To these, indeed, I may justly add, the Study of the Human Mind, in reference to which I adduce with cordial approbation the words of an anonymous writer:—

"As we conceive that no science can be of more

importance to the preacher, so we are apt to think that no science is more commonly neglected: and hence it arises, on the one hand, that the class of men, who, by their continued professional scrutiny of the minds of others might be expected to throw most light upon this department of science, are very small contributors to it; and on the other, that if any of them are anxious for that species of metaphysical knowledge more immediately bearing on their profession, they know not where to seek it. The fruits of all this in theology are much of the same kind as if military men were to forswear the subject of military tactics and physicians that of medicine. It is indeed difficult to conceive to what an amount the usefulness of Sermons is impaired by ignorance of the human mind. We apprehend that nothing in Scripture itself is more apt to touch and affect the heart, than what has been termed its "power of divination;" or in other words, that perspicacity by which it exhibits what is in the heart of the hearer, and reveals the man to himself. And an intimate acquaintance with the powers, habits and workings of the mind, would to a certain extent, supply the preacher with a talisman of the same kind. We should stand before him convicted, rebuked, and condemned; and often, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who delights to work by rational means on rational creatures, should be led to exclaim, that "God was with him of a truth."*

A *third* course of reading should be pursued with

* See Critique on Simeon's Horæ Homileticæ, in the Christian Observer—Nov. 1820.

a view to *devotional excitement, and the cultivation of personal religion.*

Let it ever be remembered, that the character of the christian is not to be merged in the official avocations of the minister. A solicitous regard to the interests of personal piety should every day of life take the lead of all other concerns. Nor can it be supposed, that the mind can be duly qualified for the spiritual and elevated duties of the christian ministry, unless the religion of the heart be cultivated with watchful care. In addition to the devotional study of the Holy Scriptures, great advantage may be derived from the habit of allotting a certain limited portion of time, every day, to a course of reading, for the purposes of religious improvement. Some of the writings of the old divines may be read with this view, with incalculable advantage; nor is any species of reading more beneficial in promoting at once devotional excitement and professional diligence, than the biography of distinguished christians, and of ministers eminent for piety and usefulness.

To these courses of reading I would add a *fourth*— It is *the reading of the Latin and Greek Classics.*

The avocations of a christian minister may reduce within narrow limits the time which can be devoted to this object; but surely if the object be of sufficient importance, to justify the rank which these studies hold, in every course of liberal and professional education, they are entitled at least to some allotment of time in the subsequent studies of the christian ministry.

On the most profitable method of reading, I would offer a few remarks.

"Reading," observes Mr. Locke, "furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge, it is thinking makes what we read ours. We are of the ruminating kind, and it is not enough to cram ourselves with a great load of collections:—there are indeed in some writers visible instances of deep thoughts, close and acute reasoning, and ideas well pursued. The light these would give would be of great use, if their reader would observe and imitate them:—but that can be done only by our own meditation."

In the spirit of these remarks it may be observed, that the materials of knowledge which we obtain by reading, should undergo a mental process of digestion so as to be incorporated with our own ideas, and to augment the strength and resources of our own minds. In proportion as the mind thus adds to its stores of knowledge, instead of being burdened by its accumulations, its capacity of reception and of retention becomes expanded.—"New Knowledge, (observes Maclaurin) does not consist so much in our having access to a new object, as in comparing it with others already known, observing its relations to them, or discerning what it has in common with them, and wherein their disparity consists; and, therefore, our knowledge is vastly greater than the sum of what all its objects separately could afford; and when a new object comes within our reach, the addition to our knowledge is the greater, the more we already know; so that it increases, not as the

new objects increase, but in a much higher proportion."*

Some persons attach great importance to the habit of keeping a common-place-book, for the purpose of inserting copious extracts with which they meet in the course of their reading. This plan appears to me to be advisable only when the passage is preeminently valuable, and the book in which it occurs is not usually accessible. In other cases, the method appears liable to numerous and weighty objections. It requires an expenditure of time for which no equivalent is received, by the slight impression produced in the mere act of transcribing. We deceive ourselves greatly by imagining it is made our own, merely because it is entered in our *collectanea*, since it is uncertain whether we may ever read it again. If the book we are reading be in our own possession, it may be advantageous to mark in the margin, passages which demand a second or a repeated perusal, and to enter in a book, alphabetically arranged, a reference to the passage, under an appropriate title. We should thus obtain, by degrees, a valuable index to the most important contents of the books in our possession, which have obtained a careful perusal.

I have now to suggest a few Hints of Advice in reference to—

* See his View of Newton's Discoveries.

III.

THE BEST METHOD OF CONDUCTING DIRECT PREPARATION FOR THE PULPIT.

1. *Remember the influence of devotional excitement on the operations of the intellect, when employed on spiritual subjects, and the importance of obtaining that divine aid which the Scriptures encourage us to expect.*

"Offer up your daily requests to God the Father of lights, that he would bless all your attempts and labours in reading and in study. Think with yourself, how easily and how insensibly, by one turn of thought, he can lead you into a large scene of useful ideas: he can teach you to lay hold on a clue which may guide your thoughts with safety and ease through all the difficulties of an intricate subject.——He expects to be acknowledged in the common affairs of life, and he does as certainly expect it in the superior operations of the mind; and in the search of knowledge and truth. —Bishop Sanderson says, that study without prayer is atheism, as well as that prayer without study is presumption. *Bene orasse est bene studuisse.*"*

The duties of a christian minister are spiritual duties, and require therefore spiritual and devotional habits of thought and feeling. If the state of mind correspond with the character of the subjects on which intellectual energy is to be employed, the employment becomes easy and delightful; if otherwise, it is difficult, if not irksome. The hours expended in the pre-

* Dr. Watts's Improvement of the Mind.

paration of discourses for the pulpit may, on these principles, be either among the most happy, or the most distressing, of studious life. Under the influence of devotional excitement, with what clearness and with what beauty, may an interesting passage of the word of God unfold its meaning to the eye of the mind. It becomes at once a source of spiritual delight and a theme for pulpit discussion. The truths it inculcates or involves, present themselves in quick succession to the meditating mind, and seem to arrange themselves, without difficulty, in an order the most natural and correct.

II. *Endeavour to connect mental improvement and acquisitions of knowledge with your ordinary preparations for the pulpit.*

The young preacher should by no means think it sufficient, to make that preparation for his appearance in the pulpit, which he supposes will be deemed adequate and respectable, by those who attend on his ministry. To satisfy *himself* should be with him an object of much more difficult attainment, under ordinary circumstances, than to satisfy his hearers; and he should not allow himself to be satisfied, unless he has so conducted his preparation of discourses, as to have made some addition to his store of valuable ideas, or at least to have made some progress in the cultivation of useful habits of thought and of expression.

There are several plans by which this improvement may be secured; some of which I will suggest—

1.) *Pursue, when opportunity occurs, those inqui-*

ries which may incidentally arise out of the texts or the subjects which you are studying, with a view to public discourses.

Let not a spirit of indolence restrict your inquiries on any important points, because you are aware that no reference to such points is necessary in the discourse you may be preparing. Those points may have an important bearing on a variety of subjects, and the investigation may tend to enrich your mind by the addition of important knowledge, or at least to preserve you from injurious prejudices and mistakes. Much, very much, I conceive, of the knowledge by which superior minds are distinguished, has been accumulated by the habit now recommended. Scarcely has any subject, especially in their earlier studies, employed their thoughts, without prompting some inquiries on points, on which they were impatient to acquire more correct or more extensive information. Had not those wishes excited them to embrace the earliest opportunities of investigation, that knowledge would probably never have been attained. With a view to the practicability of this extended and liberal plan of studying discourses for the pulpit, as well as for other reasons afterwards to be considered, it is of great importance to allow, for such preparations, time sufficiently ample to prevent the necessity of eager and inconsiderate haste, with the entire omission and neglect of all inquiries not absolutely essential to the composition of the proposed discourse.

2.) *Consult the best authors to whose works you*

have access, who have written on the subject which you propose to discuss.

It is indeed advisable previously to your having recourse to the wealth of other minds, to make a vigorous demand upon the stores of your own mind; but having done this, you may with great advantage have recourse to the productions of men of superior intellect and attainments. This method is by no means to be adopted, with a view to suspend or to diminish your own intellectual labour, but, on the contrary, to secure several important advantages which I will specify :—

It will give excitement to the mind, and rouse it to a state of higher energy and activity.—It will present ample materials for thought and reflection; and should the mind fix, with a vigorous grasp, only on some one interesting thought, that single idea may be the first of a train, which will give a character and a value to the whole discourse.—It will give further amplitude and richness and vividness to many of the illustrations which your own mind might have suggested in part, but with much less power of exciting interest and impression. It will also serve to give additional confidence in the expression of your own opinion.

3.) *Be not satisfied with selecting detached texts and miscellaneous subjects, but in addition to these enter on a course of expository lectures, and a series of connected discourses.*

The method now recommended will be at once instructive to the hearers, and highly conducive to the improvement of the preacher. It will prevent the wearisome and fruitless expenditure of time in search-

ing after subjects of discourse—it will supply many interesting topics which might not otherwise engage the attention—it will habituate the mind of the minister of truth, to investigate with diligence the exact meaning of every part of Scripture which he undertakes to interpret—and it will stimulate most powerfully to vigorous thought, extensive reading, and biblical researches.

It is possible that some preachers may hesitate to adopt the plans now recommended, from the fear of their proving unpopular, and failing to excite sufficient interest. Let the inquiry then be made,—Have they tried the experiment? Have they pursued the plan with the spirit and the application it requires? Have they adopted a judicious selection of subjects? In expounding the Scriptures, have they made choice of such books or chapters, as were best adapted to their own mental resources and to the circumstances of their hearers? Have they been sufficiently anxious to combine instruction with impression; and while they endeavoured to convey knowledge to the understanding, has it been also their assiduous attempt to awaken the conscience and to affect the heart? If these objects are kept in view, in the conduct of expository lectures, and the discussion of connected subjects, the interest excited in the minds of the hearers, instead of being diminished, will be most sensibly augmented.

4.) *Let the subjects and the texts intended for the discourses of the succeeding sabbath be selected early in the week.*

I envy not the preacher who can allow day after day in the early part of the week to glide away, with-

out any solicitude to determine on what subjects he shall address his auditory on the approaching Sabbath. Can he secure at the end of the week all that leisure on which he calculates—all that freedom from intrusion and interruption requisite to tranquil continuity of thought? Is it certain that he will experience no perplexity or embarrassment in effecting a choice, when a choice can no longer be delayed? Is he wise in deferring his effort to select a subject till that period of the week, when all the time that remains is scarcely sufficient for the requisite inquiries and reflections, even were the choice already determined? Is he consulting the approbation of his own mind, or the approbation of Him in whose service he is engaged, or the good of those whose edification he is anxious to promote? Is he not negligently unmindful of the benefit he might derive, during the course of the week, from those thoughts and feelings which, even without any direct exertion, might almost spontaneously occur to his mind, and become intimately associated with the subject on which he is to preach, were the selection of that subject to precede, by a due interval, the period of direct preparation?

III. *Let not undue importance be attached to artificial rules for the composition of sermons.*

I would not discourage the perusal of such productions as the celebrated Essay by Claude, on the composition of a Sermon, but I will take the liberty of saying, that I attach to such aids only a subordinate degree of importance. An able translator of that Essay states in his Preface, that he was induced to publish

it, " for the use of those studious ministers in our Protestant Dissenting churches, who have not enjoyed the advantage of a regular Academical Education." The remark obviously implies, that, in his opinion, the rules and advices which that Essay contains are of much less importance to those who have enjoyed such advantages; and I cannot but be of opinion, that they whose minds have been disciplined, by a course of liberal studies, will derive far more assistance from the guidance of *general principles* than from any specific or artificial rules.

Almost all the exercises of intellect which a judicious plan of education prescribes, have a tendency to train the mind to those habits of thought which dictate a natural, and therefore a logical, method of unfolding and arranging our ideas, so as to put our hearers, by a method the most direct, into full possession of our sentiments. Whatever then is adapted to induce these important habits of thought, tends, by most beneficial influence, to supersede the necessity of artificial aid, and at the same time to secure the additional advantage of leaving the mind free from those fetters and trammels which the rules of art too frequently impose.

In the composition of sermons the exercise of a discriminating judgment is requisite, not only in the formation, but also in the *exhibition*, of the plan of arrangement. If the general outline be not explicitly stated, the hearer remains without any pledge, for the judicious selection, or orderly distribution, of the materials of thought which belong to the subject, and without that excitement to fixed attention, and that aid in his efforts to recollect the train of thought, which the

preacher should not fail to afford. On the other hand, if the arrangement be too formal, or the plan too fully disclosed, other evils are incurred. An exposure of these may be given, with greatest effect, in the words of a master of pulpit eloquence, whose discourses exhibit the most finished models of correct thought, elevated sentiment and elegant composition which our language contains:—

"In the mode of conducting our public ministrations, we are, perhaps, too formal and mechanical; in the distribution of the matter of our Sermons, we indulge too little variety, and, exposing our plan in all its parts, abate the edge of curiosity, by enabling the hearer to anticipate what we intend to advance. Why should that force which surprise gives to every emotion, derived from just and affecting sentiments, be banished from the pulpit, when it is found of such moment in every other kind of public address?——Method, we are aware, is an essential ingredient in every discourse designed for the instruction of mankind, but it ought never to force itself on the attention as an object apart; never appear to be an end, instead of an instrument; or beget a suspicion of the sentiments being introduced for the sake of the method, not the method for the sentiments."*

IV. *Endeavour to ascertain and to exhibit the leading sentiment intended to be conveyed by the text you have selected, and let that leading sentiment dictate the spirit and plan of the discourse.*

It is only by this method of studying discourses,

* Sermon on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister. By the Rev. Rob. Hall.

that an enlightened preacher can satisfy the demands either of his judgment or of his conscience, or meet the just expectations of those hearers, who are anxious to make progress in the knowledge of the Scriptures. It is by this method that the preacher will best secure unity of design in every discourse, and a suitable variety in his plans of arrangement. That variety will naturally grow out of the habit of yielding his mind to the impression, which the prominent idea of a text is calculated to produce: a diversity of method, without any direct effort to attain it, will then almost follow, of course, from a variety in the texts and subjects themselves.

By adopting this mode of constructing sermons, the preacher will be effectually on his guard against the very prevalent evil, to which it might have been presumed only minds of an inferior order would be exposed—it is the plan of dividing texts, not on principles of logical analysis, but of verbal dissection. Without any apparent solicitude to fix on the point which is of primary importance, preachers of this class distribute the *words* rather than the *sentiments* under distinct heads, and frequently amplify very subordinate points at which the text merely glances, with as great a latitude of illustration as the topic which is of primary importance. The sentiment which the discourse ought chiefly to impress upon the mind receives but very transient and superficial notice, and the attention, so far from being concentrated upon the main point which the inspired writer had in view, is distracted by a variety of topics irrelevant, or at least subordinate.

v. *In the study and in the delivery of your Sermons, let your first and chief solicitude regard the thought rather than the language.*

It is of great importance that the language we employ should be an adequate and appropriate vehicle of thought, but the primary object of anxiety should be, that we may have ideas worthy of conveyance. No laboured embellishments of style can compensate for poverty of thought; nor will the act of communication be usually difficult, if the ideas possess an intrinsic value. Now in order to give real value to a discourse, and a fitness to accomplish the object proposed, we should be anxious to secure three points:——There should be a clear elucidation or enforcement of some scriptural truth—there should be in every part of the discourse continuity of thought—and there should be, in the structure of the whole, an adaptation to produce impression and effect.

vi. *Aim chiefly at those qualities of style which are calculated to secure the great ends of discourses from the pulpit.*

The first object of a speaker or writer should be to study perspicuity of expression. "Whatever," observes Dr. Campbell, "be the ultimate intention of the orator, to inform, to convince, to please, to move, or to persuade, still he must speak so as to be understood, or he speaks to no purpose. If he do not propose to convey certain sentiments into the minds of his hearers, by the aid of signs intelligible to them, he may as well declaim before them in an unknown tongue. Per-

spicuity, being to the understanding what light is to the eye, ought to be diffused over the whole performance. —By perspicuity, as Quintilian justly observes, care is to be taken, not that the hearer *may* understand if he will; but that he *must* understand, whether he will or not."*

If the first object of the preacher's solicitude be, that his ideas should have free entrance into the *intellect* of his hearers, his next concern should be that they should obtain an avenue to the *heart*. A style distinguished by vigour and energy is with this view greatly to be desired; nor is that quality inferior in value to which Dr. Campbell has given the name of the *affecting*. "Though this," he observes, "has more particularly a place in those discourses which admit and even require a good deal of the pathetic, yet in a certain degree, it ought to accompany every thing that comes from the pulpit. All from that quarter is conceived to be, mediately or immediately, connected with the most important interests of mankind. This gives a propriety to the affecting manner in a certain degree, whatever be the particular subject.—It is this quality in preaching to which the French critics have given the name of *onction*, and which they explain to be an affecting sweetness of manner which engages the heart. It is indeed that warmth and gentle emotion in the address and language, which serve to shew, that the speaker is much in earnest in what he says, and is actuated to say it from the tenderest concern for the wel-

* Non ut intelligere possit, sed ne omnino possit non intelligere curandum. Instit. lib. viii. cap. 2.

fare of his hearers.—There are other graces of elocution, which may occasionally find a place in the pulpit, such as the nervous, the elegant, and some others; but the former (the perspicuous and the affecting manner) ought never to be wanting. The former, therefore, are characteristic qualities, the latter are so far from being such, that sometimes they are rather of an opposite tendency.—Elegance demands a certain polish, that is not always entirely compatible with that artless simplicity, with which, when the great truths of religion are adorned, they appear always to the most advantage, and in the truest majesty. They are, when unadorned, adorned the most."

VII. *Cultivate, during the early years of your ministry, the habit of writing some of your discourses, with due regard to the composition.*

This is desirable not only with a view to improvement in style, but also to improvement in the power of thought. Such is the connexion between thinking and expressing thought, that to attempt the latter is one of the most effectual methods to excel in the former. Frequent composition has a powerful tendency to secure clearness in our conceptions, as well as precision in our language, and at once to promote fulness of illustration and compression of style. It will be the most effectual preservative from that loose and tedious style of expression, by which some speakers employ a profusion of words to convey a very few thoughts, and exhaust the patience of their hearers by a dull prolixity which excludes all point, vivacity and condensation.

If, however, composition for the pulpit be attempted, it should be the result of energetic thought and the strenuous application of the mind to the subject. Let it not be imagined, that because a sermon is written, it must therefore be superior to other discourses, by the same preacher, which have not been reduced to writing. A careless, hurried composition will be, in all probability, vapid, dull and spiritless, and decidedly inferior, both in thought and language, to a sermon of which the outline merely was written, but of which the materials for illustration were selected with care, though not committed to writing. The latter method of studying for the pulpit may indeed, with great advantage, be pursued conjointly with the plan of careful composition. And while this combination of plans of study might with propriety be recommended as eligible, it is in fact the plan to which ministers must often have recourse from necessity, if a demand be made upon them by their congregations of several discourses every week. By carrying on both methods, and by writing out at least one sermon with care every week, the young preacher may be making progress in the excellencies of a style best adapted for the pulpit, while, in conjunction with this effort, he may be acquiring additional facilities in expressing his thoughts with fluency in unpremeditated language.

VIII. *Allow not the habit of writing sermons to occasion the adoption of any undesirable method of delivering discourses from the pulpit.*

If a sermon be fairly written out at full length, then

unquestionably the easiest way of delivery which the preacher can adopt, is to read it to his hearers. During the interval between the composition and the delivery of the sermon (if interval there be) the mind of the preacher may be perfectly free from anxiety, nor will the power of impression be dependent, in any considerable degree, upon the possession or the absence of desirable feelings on the part of the minister. But if in this respect he obtain a relief from solicitude, how costly is the purchase, how great the sacrifice by which he obtains the exemption. His countenance, his tones, his attitudes are more or less subjected to a species of mechanical restraint, if not even laid under a paralyzing interdict. His communion of spirit with the auditory he addresses is rendered by far less intimate, and his power of awakening their sympathies and exciting in their minds emotions in unison with his own, is, by his own act and deed, immeasurably enfeebled.

There have been, indeed, and there are individuals whose eloquent discourses, even when read from the pulpit, excite a lively feeling and produce a deep impression. Let not, however, their example induce the young preacher to presume on a successful imitation. Let him first become their equal in eloquence, and then, and not till then, let him venture to imitate their mode of delivering their discourses.

But if objections so strong may be urged against the practice of reading sermons, what opinion are we to form of the method of committing them to memory after they have been written, and reciting them in the pulpit *memoriter*?—There are, it is acknowledged,

preachers who can deliver their sermons, thus committed to memory, with so much fluency and effect, that they may be regarded as affording exceptions to the general remarks which may justly be offered on the plan itself. It was the decided opinion of the Author of the Philosophy of Rhetoric, both from his own experience and the extensive observations he had made, that the plan of repeating sermons from memory is a method still more unfavourable to impression than the method of reading them. "There is something," he justly observes, "in charging one's memory with a long chain of words and syllables, and then running on, as it were, mechanically in the same train, the preceding word associating and drawing in the subsequent, that seems, by taking off a man's attention from the thought to the expression, to render him unsusceptible of the delicate sensibility as to the thought, which is the true spring of rhetorical pronunciation.—As to my personal experience," adds Dr. Campbell, "I shall frankly tell you what I know to be the fact. I have tried both ways; I continued long in the practice of repeating, and was even thought (if people did not very much deceive me) to succeed in it; but I am absolutely certain, that I can give more energy, and preserve the attention of the hearers better, to what I read, than ever it was in my power to do to what I repeated."*

This quotation, it is scarcely necessary to observe, after the remarks already made, is adduced, not to represent the plan of reading sermons as eligible, but to

* See Dr. Campbell's Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence. Lect. IV.

shew that, undesirable as it is, there may be at least as many considerations urged in its defence, as in favour of the very ineligible method of submitting, first to the servile drudgery of committing discourses to memory, and then to the agitating process of reciting them to the congregation.

What then, it may be asked, is the most advisable method of preaching? It is, I think, beyond a doubt, the method recommended long ago by the excellent Fenelon in his Dialogues on Pulpit Eloquence, and practised, I believe with a greater or less degree of studious preparation, by a very considerable number of the most acceptable and useful preachers of the present day. It is the method of writing a considerable part, and occasionally the whole of a sermon, in the act of preparing to preach, and, after due reflection on the train of thought pursued in every part of the discourse, endeavouring to exhibit to the hearers the precise plan, the intended sentiments, and the substance of the illustrations, without any anxiety to adhere to the exact language in which they had been expressed. If, in any instances, as may be naturally expected, the very terms and phrases occur to the mind, they are adopted; if not, the thought is embodied, without hesitation, in such modes of expression as at the moment suggest themselves to the mind. Under these circumstances the mind derives full advantage from application to previous study, while it is perfectly unfettered by any painful efforts of memory, and fully enabled to yield itself to the impulses of feeling, which the subject, the occasion, and a scriptural dependence on divine aid may encour-

age. Some preachers have sufficient confidence in their powers of memory, to retain, without any difficulty or solicitude, the exact plan of arrangement which they have resolved to adopt; others, very justifiably avail themselves in the pulpit of an outline of their discourse, in order to guard against the least danger of embarrassment, from forgetting, at any moment, the next division of their subject to which they intended to proceed.

PART III.

HINTS ON THE CULTIVATION OF THOSE MORAL HABITS WHICH WILL FACILITATE THE HONOURABLE AND SUCCESSFUL DISCHARGE OF PASTORAL DUTIES.

I.

Reflect much on the indispensable and transcendent Importance of Personal Religion.

Let it be impressed upon your mind, with all the force and all the authority of an incontrovertible axiom, that unless you are, in the sight of God, a Christian, you are destitute of the primary and essential qualification for the office of a Christian Minister. Remember, that personal religion has its commencement in the renovation of the mind and heart, by the power of the Spirit of God; and forget not from whose lips proceeded the declaration—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Under the influence of this spirit-stirring assertion, let conscience be summoned deliberately to reply to such inquiries as

these :—Is not my assumption of the ministerial character a solemn and public profession of being a Christian, and of believing myself to be a Christian? Can I then make this decided profession, before the church and before the world, without any danger of hypocrisy? Have I reason, on the strictest scrutiny into my own heart, to believe that I really am that which, virtually at least, I profess myself to be? Were I to enter on the sacred office, destitute of real religion, should I not find its spiritual duties irksome, and its responsibility terrific? And should I not be bringing myself under an accumulation of guilt, from the distant idea of which I may well shrink with dismay?

If inquiries such as these can receive a satisfactory reply, let it still be an object of deep and perpetual solicitude, to make progress in personal religion. Never let *personal* religion be merged in that which is *professional.* Let not the feelings and the habits of the *Minister* induce remissness with regard to the feelings and the habits of the *Christian.* Remember that in your individual, as well as in your pastoral character, you must hereafter appear before the throne of judgment; and forget not in your individual, as well as in your pastoral capacity, habitually to appear before the throne of grace. Be assured, also, that a due concern for the salvation and prosperity of your own soul, will be the best preparative for successful efforts, to promote the salvation and prosperity of the souls of others.

II.

Aim, with the most conscientious solicitude, at Purity of Motive in all your Ministerial Engagements.

Institute a scrutinizing inquiry into the motives which have induced you to enter on the office of the Christian Ministry. Was your choice determined under the influence of the love of literature and science, for the pursuit of which you promised yourself, in the ministerial office, opportunity and facility? Can you trace among your leading motives a desire of professional distinction and eminence? Can you detect, among your principal inducements, a desire of elevation to greater emolument or higher connexions, than you had otherwise encouragement to anticipate? Were you at liberty to choose a profession on merely secular principles, such considerations as these might naturally be expected to exert an influence over your mind; but in entering on the Christian Ministry, you are supposed to act, and you are required to act, on principles of higher character; and it may be presumed, that you have solemnly professed to be actuated by a supreme desire to promote the glory of God, the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal interests of your fellow-men. Ever, then, guard against the influence of unworthy and sinister motives, in all the objects at which you aim, in all the arrangements you form for the prosecution of your studies, and especially in all the discourses you deliver from the pulpit.

"The ministerial work," observes Mr. Baxter (in his Reformed Pastor) "must be managed purely for God and the salvation of the people, and not for any private ends of our own. This is our sincerity in it. A wrong end makes all the work bad. It is not a serving God, but ourselves, if we do it not for God, but for ourselves. They that set upon this as a common work, to make a trade of it for their worldly livelihood, will find that they have chosen a bad trade, though a good employment. Hard studies, much knowledge, and excellent preaching, is but hypocritical sinning, if the ends be not right."

Let usefulness, then—usefulness to the souls of men, be your grand and perpetual aim. Let your mind be habitually engaged in reflecting on the value of the human soul—the danger of perdition to which many of your hearers may be still exposed—the paramount importance of rescuing them from impending ruin, and bringing them to the enjoyment of the great salvation! Under the exciting and directing influence of such considerations as these, let your subjects be selected; let your discussions be pursued; let your thoughts be arranged; let your style be formed; let your discourses be delivered. Let those words of an inspired teacher dwell much upon your mind:—"Let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

III.

Repress, to the utmost, the feelings of Vanity and Pride, and the undue desire of Popular Applause.

"Humility," observes Mr. Cecil, "is the spirit of our dispensation—not a creeping servile humility, but an entire self-renunciation. Pride is the most universal and inveterate of all vices—every man is a proud man, though all are not equally proud. No sin harasses the christian so much, nor accompanies him so unweariedly; its forms of exhibiting itself are infinitely varied, and none are more common than the affectation of humility. Pride is the master-sin of the spirit; and the grace of God, in the whole tenor of our dispensation, is directed against it."

Against the ever-besetting sins of pride and vanity, the christian minister, and more especially the young minister, should be perpetually on his guard: he is in danger of being tempted to pride of office, to pride of real or imaginary talent, to pride of learning, and perhaps to pride of popularity and success. While in danger of the pride which would impel him to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, he is in danger also of the vanity which would impel him to aim at display, that he may excite the admiration of others, and receive the incense of their praise. Against these fearful dangers, then, let him be ever on his guard; let him view himself in the light in which he would be regarded by others, were the inward workings of pride and vanity distinctly apparent in their view; and let him ask his own heart, whether, if he would be

degraded in *their* estimation by the disclosure, he ought not to feel more degraded in *his own*, by the consciousness of their indulgence. Pitiably fallen from true dignity is he, in whose mind the elevation of human applause can counteract the depressing influence of self-reproach! But there is another and a stronger light, in which the christian minister is required to contemplate and scrutinize the principles of his conduct—it is "the light of *His* countenace who searcheth the heart, and knoweth what is in man, and requireth that whatever we do in word or deed, we should do in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving glory to God by him."

To recommend the young minister to cherish a feeling of *indifference* with regard to the estimation in which his pulpit services are held, would indicate ignorance both of human nature and of christian morals.—"Let every one of us," said an Apostle, "please his neighbour for his good, to edification." If usefulness be the end at which he aims in his ministry, and the acceptableness of his exertions be desired, as a means to the accomplishment of that end, he is not chargeable with a dereliction of christian principle: to please is, to a certain degree, almost necessary in order to persuade. Of this the wisest of men was convinced, and therefore, in the review of his labours, he thus expressess himself:—"Because the preacher was wise, he gave good heed, and sought out and set in order many proverbs, and sought to find out acceptable words."

If, however, applause be valued and pursued for its own sake, and for the gratification of the principle of self-love, it becomes positively sinful in its character, and highly injurious in its tendency. Under the influence of the feelings now induced, the mind is yielded to the domination of vanity. This degrading vice never can be more offensive in the eyes of an Omniscient Observer, than when it vitiates the performances of the pulpit, and urges its occupant to aim at the display of his critical acumen, his extensive research, his strength of reasoning, his fertility of imagination, or his power of graceful and impressive elocution. "If he, on the one hand," observes Dr. Chalmers, "enter with aspiring confidence into the field of argument, and think that he is to carry all before him, by a series of invincible demonstrations; or if his people, on the other hand, ever ready to be set in motion by the idle impulse of novelty, or to be seduced by the glare of human accomplishments, come in trooping multitudes around him, and hang on the eloquence of his lips, or the wisdom of his able and profound understanding, a more unchristian attitude cannot be conceived; nor shall we venture to compute the weekly accumulation of guilt which may come upon the parties, when such a business as this is going on. How little must the presence of God be felt in that place, where the high functions of the pulpit are degraded into a stipulated exchange of entertainment on the one side, and of admiration on the other: and surely it were a sight to make angels weep, when a weak and vapouring mortal, surrounded by his fellow-sinners, and hastening to the grave and the judgment

along with them, finds it a dearer object to his bosom, to regale his hearers by the exhibition of himself, than to do, in plain earnest, the work of his Master, and urge on the business of repentance and of faith, by the impressive simplicities of the Gospel."

IV.

Let the grand points in Religion have their due prominence in your Discourses.

In selecting and combining the materials of your discourses, there are three questions which it appears reasonable to ask; and the correct answers to these inquiries will clearly prescribe the course to be pursued.

The first question is—What are the things of *primary importance* to my hearers?—in other words, What are the things which it is essential to know and believe and feel, in order to eternal salvation? This question is decided by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who thus addressed his heavenly Father: "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Then, whatever may be omitted in discourses from the pulpit, there must be no omission of the doctrine of "Christ crucified." It is the grand essential; it is the indispensable requisite. "If we can but teach Christ to our people," says Mr. Baxter, "we teach them all. We must have our people's *necessities* in our eyes. Other things are desirable, but these *must* be known, or else our people are

undone for ever. I confess necessity has been the conductor of my studies and life. It chooses the book I shall read, and tells when, and how long. It chooses my text, and makes my sermon."

A second question is—What am I *required*, by my divine Master, to make the prevailing and characteristic topics of my ministry? I obtain a satisfactory answer to this inquiry, from the declaration and the example of the greatest of human teachers, under the influence of direct inspiration. "I determined not to know (to make known) any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.—We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Are there not many preachers, well affected, apparently, to evangelical doctrine, who fall very far short of that style of preaching Christ which the apostle Paul adopted and enforced? They preach Christ occasionally, and, in their own opinion, as often as the topic of discussion leads to Christ; but not unfrequently they find it difficult to trace the bearing of the subject on the character or work of Christ. The apostle Paul would, in every instance, have traced it, with ease and gracefulness and effect.

A third question is—What is the description of preaching, which, in point of fact, proves *most efficient*? And in pursuing this inquiry, I am led precisely to the same result as in obtaining replies to the two former questions. To whatever period of the history of the church I direct my inquiries; or to whatever denomina-

tion of christians, or to whatever order of preachers, in point of talents or learning—I find *that* ministry to be most efficient, and indeed, that ministry *alone* to be efficient, in which the doctrine of the Cross of Christ obtains the same prominence, with which it was exhibited in the preaching of the apostles themselves. Such is the important fact; nor is it difficult, on the principles of the New Testament, to account for the fact. The ministry of the gospel owes its efficiency to the superadded influence of the Spirit of God. Now of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, when giving to the disciples the promise of his influence, "He shall glorify me." The Holy Spirit then glorifies the Saviour, by honouring with efficiency and success the ministry which honours Christ. Inefficient, as it regards the grand results of the christian ministry, because unaccompanied by the power of the Spirit of God, will that preaching be, which fails to honour Christ in his personal dignity, his glorious atonement, and his supreme authority. With the accompaniment of distinguished talent, it may, in some few instances, attract a numerous and applauding auditory; but it will bring no glory to God, no honour to Christ, no souls to heaven!

V.

Aim, in preaching, at the utmost Seriousness and Earnestness of Manner.

Language is at best but a partial and imperfect vehicle of thought and feeling. It does not, in every instance, excite in the mind of the hearer the exact

ideas, much less the entire impression, which it is the object of the speaker to convey. It is exceedingly desirable that the effect should be aided and heightened by additional indications of fervid, benignant, and impassioned feelings on the part of the speaker. If the subject be of the most momentous nature; if the future and eternal interests of the hearer be represented as involved in the reception or rejection of the truth announced; it is natural and reasonable to expect from the preacher, no slight manifestation of earnestness in the expression of his countenance, and the tones of his voice. If this expectation be disappointed there is a want of accordance and of congruity between the import of his words and the import of his delivery; he has no *natural* language to deepen the impression of his *artificial* language. The hearer feels at liberty to entertain a doubt, whether the preacher himself be the subject of such emotions as correspond with the words he employs, and even whether the preacher himself be fully convinced of their truth and importance: or, at least, he may derive from such apparent coldness and indifference an excuse for the listlessness and torpor of his own mind.

"How few," exclaims the fervid Baxter, "speak about everlasting joy or torment, in such a manner as to make men believe that they are in good earnest. Alas! we speak so drowsily, that sleepy sinners cannot hear! The blow falls so light, that the hard-hearted cannot feel! O how earnestly should we deliver a message of such a nature as ours, in which is concerned the everlasting life or death of those we address! Me-

thinks we are in no respect so deficient as in this seriousness. In the name of God, brethren, labour to awaken your hearts, that you may be prepared to awaken the hearts of sinners. Remember, if you give the holy things of God the highest praises in words, and yet do it coldly, you will seem in the manner to unsay what you said in the matter. It is a kind of contempt of things so great, to speak of them without great affection and fervency. The manner, as well as the words, must set them forth. If we are commanded, whatever our hand findeth to do, to do it with all our might; then, certainly, such should be our efforts, in preaching for men's salvation. Though I do not commend a *constant loudness* in your delivery, yet I would enforce a *constant seriousness*. Whatever you do, let the people see that you are in good earnest. I seldom come out of the pulpit" (and this is, be it remembered, the confession of a holy man, of exemplary fervour) "but my conscience smites me, that I have been no more serious and earnest. It accuses me, not so much for want of elegance, or human ornaments; or for letting fall an unhandsome word: but it asks me,—How couldst thou speak of everlasting life and death with such a heart? How couldst thou preach of heaven and hell in so careless and sleepy a manner? Dost thou believe what thou sayest? Art thou in earnest or in jest? How canst thou tell people, that sin is so evil, and that its consequences are so dreadful, without being more affected by it? Shouldst thou not weep over sinners, even till thy tears interrupt thy words,—cry aloud, and shew them their transgressions,

—intreat them to repent and believe, with *the utmost importunity?*"

VI.

Let a deep sense of responsibility, at the Divine Tribunal, secure Ministerial Fidelity.

Certain it is, that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and *there* render an account of the manner and the motives which shall have characterized the discharge of our ministry. We are charged to preserve inviolate, and to exhibit, without the least reservation, the whole counsel of God. Let then the exhibition of divine truth be made, to every class of our hearers, with the utmost explicitness, fulness, and fearlessness. Uninfluenced by any regard to the favour or the frown of men, let us only be solicitous to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, that we may be pure from the blood of all men. "There is a most awful trust (observes Dr. Mason) committed by the Lord Jesus to his ministering servants. Oh that they felt this trust more than they sometimes do! You would not see the pulpit converted into a stage for the display of human ingenuity, or perverted to the display of human vanity. These things are lighter than a feather, and lose all their importance, in the eyes of a man who remembers that he has an account to settle with God; and that he knows not the moment when his account may be demanded. It is observable, and ought to sink deep into the heart of every preacher of the gos-

pel, that Paul accounted himself pure from the blood of all men, because he had not concealed from them any part of God's truth. He knew not that policy by which some pulpits have been disgraced, of deferring the declaration of the *whole* truth to a more convenient season. As if the native enmity of the heart were to be softened by delay—as if it could be reduced by any thing but the truth itself—as if men ever found their audiences more tractable by this kind of forbearance; or were themselves more instrumental in bringing sinners to God; or had the answer of a good conscience more complete in their own bosoms. God knows infinitely better than we, what truths are suited to our circumstances, and has revealed them in his book. If there is one trait of a faithful minister more obvious than another, it is this, that he is not afraid, nor ashamed, to say what God has said before him, in his Word."

VII.

Let there be, in your Discourses, the utmost Clearness of Discrimination between the two great classes of characters of which your hearers must necessarily consist.

"The Bible," observes Dr. Chalmers, "everywhere groups the individuals of our species into two general and distinct classes and assigns to each of them its appropriate designation. It tells us of the vessels of wrath, and of the vessels of mercy; of the travellers on a narrow path, and on a broad way; of the children of this

world, and the children of light; and lastly, of men who are carnally minded, and men who are spiritually minded. It employs these terms in a meaning so extensive, that, by each couplet of them, it embraces all individuals. There is no separate number of persons, forming of themselves a neutral class, and standing without the limits of the two others. And were it possible to conceive, that human nature, as it exists at present in the world, were laid in a map before us, you would see no intermediate ground between the two classes, which are thus contrasted in the Bible;—but these are thrown into two distinct regions, with one clear and vigorous line of demarcation between them.—We cannot conceive then a question of mightier interest, than the situation of this line,—a line which takes its own steady and unfaultering way, through the thousand varieties of character that exist in the world; and which reduces them all to two great and awfully important divisions."

Without tracing this line of demarcation, and urging the hearers to ascertain on which side of the line they actually stand, the great end of preaching cannot be secured. Without it, you cannot reasonably expect that there should be awakened a feeling of personal interest, or a sense of deep solicitude. If the hearers be not directed, and even impelled, to institute a scrutinizing inquiry into their character in the sight of God, it is to be expected that many will be saying to themselves "Peace and safety," when even on the very verge of "sudden destruction." Absurd were it to expect, that any should "flee for refuge to the hope

set before them," if they are not deeply aware of their exposure to "the wrath to come." There may be in the very discussion of a subject, and in the general structure of a discourse, ample materials for discrimination, of which every hearer *ought* to avail himself, for the purposes of self-examination; but it would betray great ignorance of the human heart, and of the delusion it often practises upon itself, to presume, that the hearer will spontaneously institute, and faithfully pursue, the process of scrutinizing his own character. To this momentous, but unwelcome effort, the preacher of the gospel should urge his auditory, in every discourse he delivers. He should not allow them to escape from the task of self-inspection. He should draw the line of demarcation with the utmost clearness, and compel them, however reluctant they may feel, to bring their consciences to the test. By means of the utmost fidelity and earnestness, he should endeavour to render it almost impossible for them to neutralize the pungency of divine warnings and threatnings, or to continue in a state of entire uncertainty, with regard to their present character, and their prospects of futurity.

VIII.

Let pointed Appeals to the Heart, and direct Applications to the Conscience, form a prominent feature of your Discourses.

Addresses from the pulpit should not assume, throughout, the *didactic* form. The preacher should

remember, that his work should not be restricted simply to *instruction*. There are other objects also at which he should strenuously aim. He should endeavour to excite, to awaken, to impress, and to persuade. In order to the attainment of these ends, he must address himself not merely to the judgment, but also to the conscience, and to the heart. Nor let him imagine, that these objects are so unconnected, as to render it advisable for him studiously to keep them apart; on the contrary, let him be aware that, from the powerful and reciprocal influence of the different parts of our mental economy, while, in many instances, the intellect forms the best avenue to the heart, so, not less frequently, is the heart the best avenue to the intellect. Whether therefore he consult the philosophy of the human mind, or the dictates of sound experience, he will avail himself of every opportunity which the subject may admit, of a pointed and powerful appeal. To defer the personal application of a subject entirely to the concluding part of a discourse, however common, appears by no means advisable. Not unfrequently does it occur, that the time is so far spent, and the patience of the hearer so far exhausted, that the applicatory part of the sermon is short and hurried and powerless. Perhaps some vague anticipation in the mind of the preacher, of the probability of this, has prevented the due consideration of those trains of thought, which might be best adapted for the purpose; so that the very part of the discourse which might have been the most efficient, is as little studied by the preacher as it is felt by the hearer. There is also an aspect of formality, when the de-

sign of a direct application is avowed, which is not, in every instance, so favourable to the desired effect, as a sudden and unexpected, yet natural and appropriate appeal, arising out of the discussion or elucidation of the subject itself. The latter comes upon the mind with the full force of the weighty and impressive sentiment by which it has been suggested, because it is pressed upon the conscience at the very time in which the sentiment itself is calling forth the vigour of the mind, and exciting the ardour of its feelings. Why then should we allow the mind to escape from the force and grasp of the momentous truth; and why should we allow the temperature of its feelings to be cooled down, before we make our demand on the conscience, and urge it to perform its duty? I do not recommend that the method of a concluding application should be altogether discontinued; but only that wherever a valuable opportunity presents itself of a warm and powerful appeal, it should be instantly and eagerly embraced; reserving only for the conclusion, such general inferences and considerations, as did not previously occur, or could not with equal advantage be introduced.

IX.

Do not aim at a degree of Originality, to which you are not equal, or of which the subject under consideration does not admit.

In the *highest* sense of the term, there are very few who can safely or successfully aspire to originality, even in their most elevated and most powerful efforts.

There is, however, a kindred quality, of a humbler, yet scarcely of a less valuable, character, at which it is not only safe but desirable to aim. This quality I would denote by the term *individuality*, and I will endeavour to explain the sense in which I venture to employ it. The *minds* of men differ not less than their countenances. The face of every individual has its own peculiar aspect, its own peculiar expression. The features taken separately, may bear resemblance to the features of many others, but the combination of the whole gives to every countenance an indescribable character of individuality, by which it is distinguished from that of every other human being. Analogous to these indications of individuality of countenance, are the characteristic differences which obtain among *minds*. The leading faculties of the intellect, and the essential susceptibilities of the heart, belong to our common nature. But, in different individuals, they exist in different degrees, and in different proportions. They have received different degrees of cultivation and of excitement; they have been developed under widely different circumstances; they have been conversant with different classes of objects. The result is, that every individual is distinguished by his own peculiar habits of thinking and of expressing thought. He has his own plans of reading, of reflecting, and of investigating. He has his own processes of incorporating the thoughts of others, with the ideas which appear to be the spontaneous produce of his own mind. His mind may be compared to a mould which gives to the yielding substance its form and character, its "image and superscription."

Now in proportion to the vigour and to the completeness of intellectual operations, and in proportion to the facility of carrying forward the processes of manly and independent thinking, the mind may be expected to obtain a character of individuality. Even when it avails itself of the thoughts of others, it has the talent of making those thoughts its own, before it communicates them by discourse or by writing. The ideas which are derived from a variety of conversations, or of books, are so modified and arranged and expressed, that although they present to notice little which can be pronounced new or original, yet they exhibit an aspect characteristically different from that which they have received from the lips, or from the pen, of any other individual. They are obviously the result of the workings of a mind, which has the power of thought, and which finds delight and facility in the exertion of that power. When employed in elucidating, in enforcing, and in applying the "word of truth," they are the operations of the "workman that needeth not to be ashamed." He may not be endowed with the talent of bold and inventive originality, but he commands and he rewards the attention of his hearers, by the characteristics of an interesting individuality. He is sufficiently alive to a sense of what he is *not* capable of attaining, to preserve him from aspiring to the elevation of a towering genius; and he is sufficiently alive to a sense of what he *is* capable of effecting, to preserve him from sinking into the degradation of a servile imitator, or of an adept at the concealment of plagiarisms.

X.

Study assiduously the best way of access to the Human Mind.

There are two great benefits which a minister should endeavour to derive from studying the philosophy of the human mind:—the one is, the improvement of his own intellectual faculties and habits;—the other is, the discovery of the most direct avenues to the minds and hearts of his hearers. If the former of these objects is to be especially pursued in a course of preparatory study, the latter should be no less the incessant object of solicitude, in the discharge of ministerial duties. Our constant aim should be to speak to the heart, through the medium of the intellect; and in order to do this, we must ascertain, by self-acquaintance, and by eagle-eyed observation what it is which interests the human mind, and what it is which affects the human heart. "The minister of the gospel," observes Mr. Cecil, "should make experiments on himself and others in order to find out what will produce effect. Nothing of this nature is lost upon mankind; it is worth its weight in gold for the service of a minister. He must remark too, what it is that puzzles and distracts the mind; all this is to be avoided: it may wear the garb of deep research, and great acumen, and extensive learning; but it is nothing to the mass of mankind. One of the most important considerations in making a sermon, is to *disembarrass* it as much as possible. The sermons of the last century were like their

arge, unwieldy chairs. Men have now a far more true idea of a chair. They consider it as a piece of furniture to sit upon, and they cut away from it every thing that embarrasses and encumbers it. It requires as much reflection and wisdom, to know what is *not* to be put into a sermon, as what is. A young minister should look around him, that he may see what has succeeded and what has not. Truth is to be his companion, but he is to clothe her so as to gain for her access. Truth must never bow to fashion or prejudice; but her garb may be varied. The man who labours to please his neighbour for his good to edification, has the mind that was in Christ. It is a sinner trying to help a sinner. Even a feeble but kind and tender man, will effect more than a genius, who is rough or artificial. There is danger, doubtless, of humouring others; and against this we must be on our guard. It is a kind and accommodating spirit at which we must aim."

In studying human nature, the young minister should be every where a learner. "He should imitate Gainsborough," observes Mr. Cecil. "Gainsborough transfused nature into his landscapes, beyond almost any of his contemporaries; because Gainsborough was every where the painter. Every remarkable feature or position of a tree—every fine stroke of nature—was copied into his pocket book on the spot; and in his next picture, appeared with a life and vivacity and nature, which no strength of memory or imagination could have supplied."

XI

In your Preparations for the Pulpit, endeavour to derive from the subject on which you are about to preach, that Spiritual Benefit which you wish your hearers to receive.

"It is the remark of Owen," observes Mr. Cecil, "that it is not sufficiently considered, how much a minister's personal religion is exposed to danger, from the very circumstance of religion being his profession and employment. He must go through the acts of religion: he must put on the appearance of religion: he must utter the language and display the feelings of religion. It requires double diligence and vigilance, to maintain, under such circumstances, the spirit of religion. I have prayed: I have talked: I have preached: but now I should perish after all, if I did not feed on the bread which I have broken to others."

"Study your discourses," said the venerable Mr. Booth, "with a devotional disposition. To this you are bound by the very nature of the case, as a christian minister. For when the Bible is before you, it is the word of God on which you meditate, and the work of God you are preparing to perform. It is reported of Dr. Cotton Mather, that in studying and preparing his sermons, his way was, at the end of every paragraph, to make a pause, and to endeavour to make his own soul feel some holy impression of the truths contained in it. This he thought would be an excellent means of delivering his sermons, with life and

spirit, and of warming the hearts of his people; and so he found it."

"Content not yourselves to have the main work of grace," said that successful minister, Mr. Baxter; "but be also very careful that your graces be kept in life and action, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons that you study, before you preach them to others. If you did this, for your own sakes, it would be no lost labour; but I am speaking to you upon the public account, that you may do it for the sake of the church. When your minds are in a heavenly frame, your people are likely to have the fruits of it. I confess I must speak it by lamentable experience, that I publish to my flock the distempers of my soul. When I let my heart grow cold, my preaching is cold. If it be not your daily serious business, to study your own hearts, and subdue corruptions, and live as upon God, all will go amiss, and you will starve your auditors; or if you have but an affected fervency, you cannot expect a blessing to attend it. Watch, therefore, for the sake of yourselves and others. And more particularly, methinks a minister should take some special pains with his heart, before he is to go to the congregation. If it be then cold, how is it to warm the hearts of the hearers! Go, therefore, specially to God for life. Read some rousing, awakening book; or meditate on the weight of the subject you are to speak of, that you may go, in the zeal of the Lord, into his house!"

To these dictates of wisdom and of experience from such men as Owen, and Baxter, and Mather, and

Cecil, and Booth, what *can* be added? "Let *us* go and do likewise."

XII.

Attach due importance to the Devotional Parts of Public Worship, and be solicitous to conduct them in a spirit of Evangelical Fervour.

It is to be feared, that among the hearers of the gospel, there are not a few, who are in the habit of regarding the *sermon* as almost every thing, and the *prayers* as of very inferior interest and minor importance. And is there no ground of apprehension, that too near an approach to this state of feeling may be suspected also, in some who preach the gospel? Mr. Cecil went so far as to say, that "the leading defect in christian ministers is the want of a devotional habit." And is not the truth of the remark too often exemplified? How often is there a display of energy, elevation and fervour in the sermon, so as to form a contrast with the dryness and coldness of the prayer! Does it not seem as if the best feelings of the soul were allowed to lie dormant in communion with God, whereas they are all in a state of excitement when a discourse is to be delivered to fellow-men? And is there not a defect in point of spirituality, as well as in point of fervour? The prayer may indeed be protracted to a sufficient and more than a sufficient length, and yet be lamentably defective. There may be too many words, and yet, with regard to many blessings of the highest value, there may be too few petitions. There may be

no want of petitions for temporal good; of petitions for individuals who request an interest in the prayers of the congregation; of petitions for our country, and for the general interests of the family of man: (and these should beyond a doubt occupy no inconsiderable space in the exercise of prolonged devotion;) but in how few words, in the prayers of some ministers, are those petitions comprised, which have reference to blessings of the highest order—blessings which a fallen, guilty, dying creature should most anxiously desire and most fervently implore! How few are the petitions for the fulness of spiritual blessings, for which the *covenant* of grace most amply provides, and for which the *throne* of grace is primarily designed! How slight is the recognition of the mediatorial character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ! How slight is the reference to the glorious operations of the Holy Spirit, and to the gracious and condescending promises of his aid, in answer to the prayer of faith! After studying the models of apostolic prayer which are left on record in the sacred writings, might not the devotional worshipper be in some instances almost tempted to think, that in conducting the devotions of the auditory, the minister had forgotten that the object of primary importance in approaching the throne of Him who heareth prayer, is to "obtain *mercy*, and to find *grace?*"

Are there not some of our *younger* ministers, who have been accustomed to think too little of the importance of the devotional exercises of public worship? Have they not much need to cultivate, in their hours of retirement, those feelings, which, when habitually pre-

valent, will be the best preparative both for the prayers and for the discourses of the pulpit? Should it not be their most earnest desire, with this view, that the word of Christ may dwell in them richly, and that the Spirit of Christ may be to them, in every act of worship, the Spirit of grace and of supplication?

XIII.

Cherish earnest Desires, and encouraging Expectations, of Success.

A man who engages with all his heart, and all his energies, in any pursuit, cannot but solicitously desire the prosperity of his undertaking; and certain it is, that the persevering efforts of his mind will bear some proportion to the expectations which he forms. The man of business, the man of letters, the lawyer and the physician, are impelled to habitual diligence in their respective careers, by the prospect of realizing their hopes. Nor is the stimulus of hope needed, in any instance more, than in the discharge of the arduous and onerous functions of the christian ministry. Many circumstances may wear an unpromising aspect, and exert a depressing influence; a counteracting influence is then greatly to be desired; and this is chiefly to be felt in the anticipations of growing usefulness and augmented prosperity.

"If you would prosper in your work," said Mr. Baxter, "be sure to keep up earnest desires and expectations of success. If your hearts be not set on the end of your labours; and you long not to see the con-

version and edification of your hearers, and do not study and preach in hope, you are not likely to see much fruit of it.—Let all that preach for Christ and men's salvation, be unsatisfied, till they have the thing they preach for. When a man only studies what to say, and how with commendation to spend the hour, and looks no more after it, unless it be to know what people think of his own abilities, and thus holds on from year to year, I must needs think that this man preaches for himself, and not for Christ, how excellently soever he may seem to do it. I know that our acceptance is not according to the fruit, but according to the degree of our labour; but he cannot be a faithful labourer, who does not long for the success of his labours, and is not grieved at their apparent failure."

The actual amount of success resulting from the ministry of any individual, in any given period, it is indeed impossible correctly to estimate. We should be on our guard, lest, according to the characteristic tendencies of our own minds, we should either appreciate that success at too low, or at too high a rate. Some men are constitutionally inclined to the former, and some to the latter extreme. Those of the one class should be reminded, that much good may have been effected, which has not yet been developed; and much which may never be fully apparent, till the day of final disclosure: those of the other class may need to be apprized—"that all is not gold which glitters." "Many evangelical and popular preachers," says the pious author of the 'Reign of Grace,' "have greatly overrated the usefulness of their own labours. For the longer I

live, the more apprehensive I am, that the number of *real* converts, among those who profess the genuine gospel, is comparatively small."

XIV.

Exercise a humble and entire Dependence on the promised Influences of the Holy Spirit.

Not one single truth, in the whole compass of divine revelation, is more firmly established, than the necessity of the influences of the Spirit of God, in order to the desired effect of divine truth upon the heart of man. Not one single promise is given with more explicitness, than the assurance of that aid, to those who ask it. If the persuasion of the necessity, and the promise of the grant, of this sacred influence, should dwell upon the mind of every christian, what should be the desire and the dependence of every christian minister? If he be himself enlightened and renewed, the doctrine of divine influence will assuredly be the grand support, and the grand encouragement, of all those hopes of success which he delights to cherish. For the copious effusion of the influences of the Holy Spirit on himsef, and on his hearers, he will most earnestly offer his supplications at the throne of heavenly grace. On this subject of deepest interest and vital importance, I cannot refrain from citing at some length the pointed and pungent remarks of Dr. Chalmers, in his sermon on the necessity of the Spirit, to give effect to the preaching of the gospel:—

"There is a dark and settled depravity in the human character, which maintains its gloomy and obstinate resistance to all our warnings and all our arguments. There is a spirit working in the children of disobedience, which no power of human eloquence can lay.—The minister who enters into this field of conflict may have zeal, and talents, and eloquence. His heart may be smitten with the love of the truth, and his mind be fully fraught with its arguments. Thus armed, he may come forth among his people, flushed with the mighty enterprise of turning souls from the dominion of Satan unto God. In all the hope of victory, he may discharge the weapons of his warfare among them. Week after week he may reason with them out of the scriptures. Sabbath after Sabbath he may declaim, he may demonstrate, he may put forth every expedient; he may at one time set in array before them the terrors of the law; at another he may try to win them by the free offer of the gospel; and in the proud confidence of success, he may think that nothing can withstand him, and that the heart of every hearer must give way, before the ardour of his zeal, and the power of his invincible arguments. Yes: they may admire him, but the question we have to ask is, will they be converted by him? They may even go so far as to allow that it is all very true which he says. He may be their favourite preacher, and when he opens his exhortations upon them, there may be a deep and a solemn attention in every countenance. But how is the heart coming on all the while? How do these

people live, and what evidence are they giving of being born again under the power of his ministry?

"Look to all that is visible in the life of the Apostle Paul.—Never were the labours of human exertion more faithfully rendered,—never were the workings of a human instrument put forth with greater energy. But, while he did as much toward the extension of the christian faith, as if the whole success of the cause depended upon his doing,—he prayed as much, and as fervently, for this object, as if all his doings were of no consequence.—He who looked so busy, and whose hand was so constantly engaged in the work that was before him, looked for all his success, to that help which cometh from the sanctuary of God. There was his eye directed. Thence alone did he expect a blessing upon his endeavours. He wrought, and that with diligence too, because God bade him; but he also prayed, and that with equal diligence, because God had revealed to him, that plant as he may, and water as he may, God alone giveth the increase. He did homage to the will of God, by the labours of the ever-working minister,—and he did homage to the power of God, by the devotions of the ever-praying minister.—The Apostle kept both working and praying, and with him they formed two distinct emanations of the same principle; and while there are many who make these christian graces to neutralize each other, the judicious and the clear-sighted Paul, who had received the spirit of a sound mind, could give his unembarrassed vigour to both these exercises, and combine, in his own example, the utmost diligence in doing, with the utmost depen-

dence on him, who can alone give to that doing all its fruit and all its efficacy."

XV.

Endeavour to adopt the most interesting and efficient methods of conveying Religious Instruction to the Young.

Is it not in early life, that the best susceptibilities of the heart are most easily excited and directed? Is it not an instructive fact, that among those who have been religiously educated, the greater number of real conversions to God may be traced to an early date? Are not those who at present belong to the youthful class of the congregation, after a short period has elapsed, to constitute the strength of the society, whether civil or religious, with which they may be connected? Is it not most desirable that, even from early youth, they should be accustomed to regard their pastor as their friend, and to feel the attachment which grows out of the persuasion, that he is most affectionately desirous of promoting their truest interests? Are not those ministers usually the most happy, and the most successful, who display the kindest solicitude for the juvenile division of their flock? Does it not then become an object of primary importance, to devise and to adopt the best methods of guiding them into the ways of wisdom and the paths of peace?

With a view to the attainment of this grand object, various plans have been attended with encouraging success. It has been found highly beneficial, to address

to the young, at stated periods, discourses particularly adapted to their character and circumstances; and many are now the ornaments of our churches, who ascribe their first and most decided impressions of divine truth, to these effusions of pastoral solicitude. But still greater importance is to be attached to more frequent and more familiar methods of instruction, in which the precise plan may be adjusted by that practical wisdom, which will take into view the education, the habits, the intellectual attainments, and the degree of leisure, by which the greater number may be distinguished. If they have advanced beyond the age ordinarily compatible with catechetical instruction, their attention may be directed, with advantage, to a familiar exposition of some appropriate portions of scripture—or to a series of familiar lectures on the most important points of theological truth—or to the perusal, at their own convenience, of books calculated to impress upon their minds the leading principles of divine revelation, on which the minister may offer his own remarks, for the purpose of additional illustration and enforcement. It is impossible to calculate the benefit which may arise from the persevering employment of such plans as these, when pursued with a devotional spirit, and with earnest supplication for that divine influence, without which the weighty reasoning of Paul and the winning eloquence of Apollos, even in happiest combination, would be altogether inefficient. Among the beneficial effects to be anticipated, it is not the least, that an additional interest will be felt by the young, in all the public discourses, as well as in all

the private suggestions, of their minister; and it is scarcely necessary to observe, that, in proportion to the interest thus felt, will there be encouragement to hope, that his labours of love will not be in vain.

XVI.

Endeavour to regulate, on principles which an enlightened conscience will approve, the time devoted to Pastoral Visits and Friendly Intercourse.

No subject which enters into the practical arrangements of the Christian Pastor, is attended with more formidable difficulty than this. I have thought upon it deliberately and seriously. I have conversed upon it with not a few of my revered fathers and my esteemed brethren, whose talents and piety have secured for their sentiments and their practice the respect of all the churches. I find among them different shades of opinion, with regard to the extent of pastoral visiting which falls within the line of duty. I hear from them many expressions of regret, that the degree of intercourse with their flock which they deem desirable, is, from a variety of circumstances, scarcely practicable; and I hear from them still louder expressions of concern, that the expectations of not a few of their people are, on this head, inconsiderate and unreasonable. The prevailing opinion among the most judicious appears to be, that the systematic and more formal mode of pastoral visiting, adopted with happy effects in former days, cannot justly be regarded as a model for *our*

imitation. The times are greatly altered, and with them the prevailing habits of life. In large and populous cities, and especially in the metropolis, such are the avocations of the people, and such the engagements of the pastor, as to render plans once easy, now almost impracticable. Never were there such demands on the time and energies and resources of ministers, as in the present day. Never were there so many calls of public duty, arising from noble and splendid associations for doing good. Never were so many discourses expected from the pulpit; never was there a higher standard of pulpit excellence, with which discourses were liable to be compared. Either then the minister must sink under the pressure of burdens too heavy for him to bear, or the time devoted to visits must be unavoidably curtailed. On these points, some very weighty observations are to be found in Dr. Mason's able discourse, on resigning his pastoral charge. The passage on which the sermon is founded, contains the declaration of the apostle Paul, that at Ephesus he had taught not only in public, but also "from house to house."

"This passage," observes Dr. Mason, "has been used, as furnishing a divine warrant, and proving a divine obligation, to what is termed parochial visitation. Highly important it is, no doubt; but to prove that apostolic example establishes a precedent for imitation, we must be sure that the circumstances to which it is applied are similar. There are two things in which the state of the churches now, differs materially from their state in primitive times.

"In the first place, they had inspired teachers;

who could, therefore, spend the whole week in exhorting, confirming, and consoling their converts, without infringing on their preparations for the Lord's Day. Our situation is quite different: close and habitual study is necessary for us. And if we cannot get time to attend to it, our ministrations grow uninteresting, and our congregations lean. In the next place, the primitive churches never permitted themselves to suffer for want of labourers. *Our* economical plan is, to make one pastor do the work which was anciently done by three or four, and the very natural consequence follows;—the work is badly done, or the workman is sacrificed.—If we were to visit as much as our people are good enough to wish, and unreasonable enough to expect, we should not have an hour left for our proper business; we could make no progress in the knowledge of the scriptures; and not one would be able to preach a sermon worthy of a sensible man's hearing."

One class of visits no faithful pastor can allow himself to omit; and it is the frequent recurrence of these which renders general visiting so extremely difficult: I refer to those primary objects of pastoral care and sympathy—the sick and the afflicted. Frequently repeated must be visits to those whom trouble has brought more feelingly to need, and more anxiously to desire, the instructions or consolations of divine truth; and whether they be rich or poor; whether they have been friendly or unkind; they are equally the objects of the most tender fidelity and persevering solicitude.

When these visits have been paid, the diligent pastor will endeavour to exercise a wise and kind superin-

tendence over the rest of his flock. If his visits can neither be frequent nor protracted, it will still be an object of his desire, to ascertain the spiritual state, and to advance, by every possible method, the spiritual prosperity of the people of his charge; and at all events, a point of no inconsiderable importance will be gained, by that occasional intercourse of friendly calls, by which kindly feelings are awakened and expressed, and interest in each other's welfare is deepened and displayed.*

* The American Editor cannot but express his opinion, that, on the subject of this chapter, the views of the very respectable author, and of the preacher whom he quotes, fall far below the true standard of Pastoral duty. As parochial visits are so important to the interests of religion, they ought not, as the Editor thinks, to be ordinarily given up for any reasons whatever. Ministers, at the present day, have indeed many objects of attention, besides the care of their particular parishes. But what minister can be supposed to have objects of attention, which, in point of importance, are comparable to those of the great Apostle,—who was called to the arduous work of incessantly preaching the gospel, of converting Gentile nations, and of writing Epistles for the benefit of Christians of every age; upon whom came the care of all the churches, and whose lot it was to endure so many sufferings for the name of Jesus? Suppose a minister is under the necessity of making laborious efforts, both in study and in preaching, and is also subject to frequent and unavoidable avocations. Let him only imitate the zeal and diligence of the apostle Paul, or of Luther, Baxter, Mather, or others of later time; let him be constantly impressed with the importance of eternal things; let him be careful to guard against the waste of his time in frivolous conversation and in fashionable visits, and against all such reading and all such business as can have no tendency to promote the object of his sacred calling;

XVII.

Cultivate, with daily solicitude, Spirituality of Mind.

"They that are after the flesh," observes the apostle, "do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." As a *christian*, your *personal* concern, and as a *minister*, your *professional* concern, is with "the things of the Spirit;" what then can be more out of character,—what can be more obstructive to comfort or to usefulness, than the prevalence of a carnal mind? It will generate an inaptitude for all the el-

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let him act habitually under the impulse of sincere love for immortal souls, and of a strong desire for their salvation; and he will undoubtedly find time for religious visits to families, and for conversation with those who belong to his charge, on their spiritual and eternal interests. Such intercourse with them will have a most salutary influence on his own mind, and on his public labors, as well as on their feelings, and their prospect of deriving benefit from his instructions. It is a general fact, that in those places where the spirit of God is poured out, and religion is in the most flourishing state, the ministers of Christ are the most attentive to the duty of making pastoral visits, and the most serious and faithful in conversing with individuals respecting the concerns of the soul. And there is much reason to apprehend that the Christian religion will never produce its happy effects in their largest extent, and in all their fulness, and that the church will never shine forth in its highest glory, before the generality of ministers shall more closely copy the example of the apostle, and shall assign to pastoral visits, and to religious conversation with individuals, a higher place among the duties of their office.

evated and spiritual duties of the sacred office, and render irksome those engagements of the study and of the pulpit, which ought to be highly pleasurable. Let there be, on the contrary, that habit of mind which is a combination of "life and peace," and the avocations of the christian ministry will become elements of the purest delight. With all the energy and excitement of the noblest "life," there will be blended the serene composure of the truest "peace," even "the peace which passeth all understanding, which is able to keep the heart and mind" from all which would disturb and annoy.

"There are various characteristics," observes Mr. Cecil, "of a spiritual mind. A spiritual mind turns to God, as the needle to the pole. A spiritual mind maintains converse with God. It looks to God for wisdom for the day, for the hour, for the business in hand. It refers its affairs to God.—It has something of the nature of the sensitive plant. There is a holy shrinking from evil.—A spiritual mind is a mortified mind. The church of Rome talks much of mortification, but her mortification is not radical and spiritual. Simon Stylites will willingly mortify himself on his pillar, if he can bring people around him to pray to *him* to pray for *them*. But the spiritual mind must mortify itself in whatever would retard its ascent toward heaven: it must rise on the wings of faith and hope and love. A spiritual mind is a sublime mind. It has a vast and extended view. It has seen the glory and beauty of Christ, and cannot therefore admire, as others, the goodliness of things seen and temporal; even as Christ

himself, says Fenelon, had seen his Father's house, and could not therefore be captivated with the glory of the earthly temple !"

Would you then cherish and maintain a divine spirituality of mind? Would you live under the power of the world to come? Would you cultivate the feelings which give most valuable excitement to the intellectual energies required in the discharge of the christian ministry? Surrender, then, your inner man, your whole soul, to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Yield yourselves in mind and heart to his life-giving and peace-inspiring influences. Aspire daily to the honour and delight of being the "Temple of the Holy Ghost." Remember that as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God: but that if any man (whether in public or private station) have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

XVIII.

Cultivate, and display, Christian Zeal for the general interests of true Religion, both at home and abroad.

With all the feelings of *pastoral* solicitude, never let the christian minister circumscribe his desires or his exertions, by the limits of his own peculiar sphere. Let him feel, not as an insulated being, labouring in a detached part of the vineyard of his Lord, regardless of his fellow-labourers who are employed with equal diligence in other scenes of exertion; but let him feel a lively interest in the efforts and the successes of all, who aim at the advancement of the Redeemer's king-

dom. Let him sedulously endeavour to excite and to maintain, in full vigour, the same spirit of benevolent activity among the people of his charge. By stimulating them to unite in *doing* good, he will direct them to the most effectual means of *gaining* good. He will most assuredly promote their own prosperity, by animating their zeal and liberality in aid of the cause of bibles, and the cause of missions, and the cause of schools, and the cause of tracts, and all the methods of doing good, on a larger or a smaller scale, which fall within the limits of their means and opportunities. Much of pastoral wisdom consists in giving full and steady and well-directed excitement, to the various classes in the church and congregation, who may be actively and appropriately employed, in the various departments of christian benevolence.

In the midst, however, of all his public engagements, let not the young minister venture to extend, without due consideration and needful restriction, his pledges of personal attendance on the meetings of benevolent and religious societies. A senior minister, whose mind is enriched with ample resources for efforts which habit has progressively facilitated, may, with impunity, make a sacrifice of hours and days, which a junior minister would make, at the hazard of his peace, of his health, and of his usefulness. Time, and time in large and unbroken portions, he must secure, for the acquirement and communication of scriptural knowledge, unless he would abandon at once the hope and the effort of making progress in the lofty and difficult attainments of pulpit excellence. "The hab-

it I recommend," said Dr. Paley, in his Charge to the younger clergy, "as the foundation of almost all the good ones, is retirement. Learn to live alone." On the well proportioned union of retired and diligent study, with social intercourse and public engagements, depends, in no small degree, the efficiency as well as the happiness of the pastor's life.

XIX.

Propose to yourself as a Model, the character of the Apostle Paul.

Great advantages will arise from studying the lives of eminent christians, and especially of eminent ministers. Their biography will be replete with powerful excitements to diligence, to devotion, to humility, to zeal. While it cannot fail to operate upon the mind with the power of an energetic stimulus, it will also suggest practical hints of the highest value, adapted to assist "the man of God" in his unwearied efforts to become "thoroughly furnished unto every good work." But if signal advantages may be secured by familiarity with the lives of such men as Philip Henry, and Cotton Mather, and Doddridge, and Scott, what shall be said of the benefits accruing from the frequent study of the most eminent of all the servants of God in lofty attainment and wide-spreading usefulness—"the Apostle of the Gentiles!" "Next to our Lord Jesus Christ," (observes Dr. Mason, than whom no man living is better qualified to appreciate or to pourtray the character in question,) "the name which figures most

gloriously in the early stages of the christian story, is that of the Apostle Paul. The grandeur of his mind, his intellectual and moral magnanimity, his heroic devotion, his patience in suffering; his powerful genius, his decision, his eloquence, his zeal, shine in every page of his writings, raise the admiration and awe the spirits of his readers, and make them feel that they enter into communion with a being of a superior order. But it is not that peculiar greatness which was inseparable from every act of the man, and excites our veneration while it forbids our rivalship, that creates our deepest interest in his character. Our understandings may be penetrated with light which has no power of warming out hearts. The most profound respect does not necessarily call forth our love. Our affections must be *won;* they cannot be *stormed.* To this principle of our nature, God has been pleased to pay particular regard, in the first heralds of the cross. However diversified their qualities and attainments—whatever be the zeal of one, the potency of argument in another, the intrepid courage of a third, that which bears the sway in all is their loveliness. Our hearts are captivated by the same process which subdues our understandings. Nothing, for example, can be more fair and unanswerable, than when Paul closes in his argument with the subtle philosopher; nothing more terrible than when he deals out the thunders of God among the gainsayers: and nothing more exquisitely tender, than his carriage toward the timid and scrupulous disciple. If ever a man knew how to wind his way into the human soul—how to coil around him its

most sacred affections—how to explore the secret place of tears, and to put in motion all its kindest sympathies, the Apostle Paul was certainly that man."

The frequent and admiring comtemplation of such a character can scarcely fail to produce a salutary effect on the mind of a christian minister. It is true that an exact imitation is impracticable. He who is best prepared to enter into the views and feelings of the great Apostle, will be most deeply conscious of an inferiority of mind and soul no less than of office: but still an elevation of sentiment, a purity of motive, a dignity of character, a benevolence of feeling, an ardour of enterprize, may be expected to grow out of the habitual contemplation and study of so glorious and so finished a character. It cannot but be beneficial to a minister, and especially to a young minister, to press the inquiry upon his own mind;—How would the Apostle Paul have acted, had he been placed in my present sphere, and surrounded by all the circumstances which give a character to my condition and my engagements? The mind which accustoms itself to such an inquiry will become incapable of any thing mean or selfish or temporising or artful: it will learn to say in the words of its admired exemplar—"Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.—Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence, towards God and towards men."

The character of the apostle Paul, observes Mr.

Cecil, was "a combination of zeal and love. The zeal of some men is of a haughty, unbending, ferocious character. They have the letter of truth, but they mount the pulpit like prize-fighters. It is with them a perpetual scold. This spirit is a reproach to the gospel. It is not the spirit of Jesus Christ. He seems to have laboured to *win* men. But there is an opposite extreme. The love of some men is all milk and kindness! There is so much delicacy and so much fastidiousness! They touch with such tenderness!—and if the patient shrinks, they will touch no more! The times are too flagrant for such a disposition. The gospel is sometimes preached in this way, till all the people agree with the preacher. He gives no offence and he does no good! But St. Paul united and blended love and zeal. He *must* win souls: but he will labour to do this by all possible lawful contrivances. 'I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.' Zeal alone may degenerate into ferociousness and brutality; and love alone into fastidiousness and delicacy: but the apostle combined both qualities; and more perfectly than other men, realized the union of the *fortiter in re* with the *suaviter in modo*."

XX.

Guard against every approach to a sectarian and party spirit; and cherish the feeling of christian love to all who embrace the faith and "adorn the doctrine" of the Gospel.

Let your whole heart echo the sentiment of the

benignant apostle—"Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." A regard to the subordinate as well as to the essential interests of truth, will necessarily compel you to regret, that on some points not unimportant, the views and practice of some appear to you wanting in scriptural accuracy or simplicity. To these points you may deem it a sacred duty, on suitable occasions, to direct the attention of the people of your charge. But this can surely be effected, without a spirit of acrimony, and without the language of invective. This is surely compatible with the spirit of christian candour and christian forbearance to those who differ in opinion. Be assured that the more perfect and the more intimate is your acquaintance with excellent and useful men of other denominations, the greater will be your delight on discovering, that the points of attraction outnumber and overpower the points of repulsion; and that the real differences present an aspect much less formidable than those which are imaginary. You will acquire the equitable and desirable habit of realizing their circumstances and placing yourselves in their situation; and of asking your own hearts, what, in all probability, would have been your predilections and prejudices, had you been descended of such parents, and educated in such schools, and trained in such habits, and accustomed to such society. It is not difficult to perceive, that the result of these ideal transfers of yourself into their former or present situations, will greatly dispose the mind to put a candid construction on opinions which quadrate not with your own, and which you still regard as inaccurate and misguided.

Let a man be once aware of the defects of many of his own processes of reasoning, on the subjects which call forth his partialities or his antipathies; let him be once aware of the extent to which he is himself indebted to education and early habits, even for some of his most correct opinions on subjects not essential; and his own heart will become a powerful monitor, to caution him against the unreasonableness of withholding his brotherly regards from those whose opinions are nearly, if not precisely, what his own would have been, under similar circumstances.

XXI.

Do full justice to the talents and excellencies of other Ministers, without the spirit of rivalry or jealousy.

There are not a few preachers of the gospel in the present day, among different denominations of Christians, whose talents are not only eminent by the order of intellect to which they belong, but also in a high degree attractive and commanding. If the consideration of this naturally affords pleasure to the mind of the *hearer* of the gospel, should it not afford at least equal delight to the mind of the *preacher* of the gospel? Should he not unfeignedly rejoice, that the truth which saves the soul is exhibited with greater power of argument, or with greater felicity of illustration, or with greater warmth of pathos, than he himself is able to display? Instead of unworthy and ungenerous attempts to detract from the eloquence and excellence

ascribed to those who are high in public estimation, ought he not to rejoice in the popularity attendant on captivating talents, when those talents are employed in advocating the cause of Christ? It is an indication of a mean and ignoble spirit, to betray an habitual reluctance to acknowledge and to admire superior abilities on the part of others. It is most unworthy of a minister of Christ, to betray the slightest approach to a spirit of jealousy and rivalry. This spirit is generally found to reside either in little and contracted minds, fearfully apprehensive of the consequences which may result from a comparison with superior talents; or in vain and ambitious minds, aspiring to the highest degree of public applause, and tremblingly alive at the appearance of other candidates, whose eloquence may be thought more brilliant than their own. If the *detection* of such unamiable and unchristian jealousy, must greatly lower the estimation in which any one is held, the *consciousness* of any secret tendencies to its indulgence, should produce the deepest humiliation in the presence of that God, to whom every hidden working of the heart is distinctly known. "This tendency," observes the judicious author of 'Sketches of Human Nature,' "often forms an excellent, though secret test, by which preachers may try the purity of the motives by which they are influenced. There is no poison more subtile than this. Its operation must have proceeded a great length indeed, before it becomes apparent to others; but it may insinuate itself into the mind, and in a certain degree exist and work much disturbance there, though the person who feels it has sense enough to conceal it.

Can you, then, cordially rejoice, though you see others not only excelling you in gifts, but making more rapid progress than you in the improvement of their gifts? If not, there is evidently something wrong. There is deep cause of humiliation, and much to be corrected."

XXII.

Deem it not justifiable for a Christian Pastor to indulge, beyond certain limits, in the pursuits of Literature and Science.

"I have had some little taste," said Dr. Doddridge, to his brethren in the ministry, "of the pleasures of literature, and have some reason to hope I shall not be suspected of any prejudice against it; but I must freely say, that I fear many things, which employ a very large portion of our retired time, are studied rather as polite amusements to our own minds, than as things which seem to have any apparent subserviency to the glory of God, and the edification of our flock; and consequently, I fear they will stand as articles of *abatement*, if I may so express it, in our final account; and when they come to be made manifest, will be found works that shall be burnt, as being no better, in the divine esteem, than wood, hay and stubble, how beautifully soever they may have been varnished or gilded over. Oh! my brethren, let us consider how fast we are posting through this dying life, into the immediate presence of our Lord! You must judge for yourselves; but permit me to say, that for my own part, I would not, for ten thousand worlds, be that man, who, when

God shall ask him at last, how he has employed most of his time, while he continued a minister in his church, and had the care of souls, should be obliged to reply, 'Lord, I have restored many corrupted passages in the ancient classics, and illustrated many which were before obscure; I have cleared up many intricacies in chronology or geography; I have solved many perplexed cases in algebra; I have refined on astronomical calculations; and left behind me many sheets on these curious and difficult subjects; and these are the employments in which my life has been worn out, while preparations for the pulpit, or ministrations in it, did not demand my immediate attendance!'"

"When reflecting in illness on my past years," said Mr. Cecil, "I have looked back with self-reproach on days spent in my study. I was wading through history and poetry, and monthly journals; but I was in my study! Another man's trifling is notorious to all observers; but what am *I* doing?—Nothing, perhaps, that has a reference to the spiritual good of my congregation! I do not speak against a chastised attention to literature, but the abuse of it."

Such remarks as these, by men so enlightened and so conscientious, have strong claims on the consideration of the young minister. It will not, however, be difficult for him to draw the line of distinction between that unwarrantable consumption of time in the pleasures and pursuits of literature, of which no good account can be rendered at the last great day, and that occasional occupation of hours and moments, not demanded by ministerial duties, by which the mind may

be relieved and recreated, as well as enriched and refined. When the distribution of time and studies proceeds on right principles, every day will be found to have its serious duties; and its duties must take precedence of its pleasures. If indeed the mind be trained by habits of salutary discipline, it will not be capable of yielding itself to the recreation of literary pleasures, until it feels entitled to unbend, by previous attention to severer studies, or by the diligent performance of other incumbent duties.

XXIII.

Suffer not the pressure of Public Engagements to contract unduly the exercises of Private Devotion.

"A man can receive nothing except it be given him of God." What success then can the christian minister be warranted to expect, either in his studies, or in his visits, or in his public discourses, unless he devoutly and earnestly seek the blessing of Him on whom all depends? How mistaken then and short-sighted are the views, which would lead him to depend much on his intellectual efforts, and little on his devotional exercises; —which would induce him to prolong the former, by unduly curtailing the latter. Although we are not to be heard by the Father of Mercies, by virtue of vain repetitions, yet it is to fervent, persevering, and importunate prayer, that spiritual blessings are promised. Might not our prayers be much more fervent, were our minds and hearts yielded more vigorously, and for a more ample portion of our time, to the devotional reading of

the Word of God, to the musings and meditations which the scriptures are calculated to suggest, and to the direct efforts of the heart to enjoy intimate communion with our God? Ought we not to feel the excitement and encouragement, arising from the numerous promises which the scriptures contain, of the gift of the Holy Spirit? Are we not greatly wanting in wisdom, when we do not plead these promises with the utmost ardour of soul, and the most lively confidence of faith? What was it which gave to the apostles of the Saviour, and to the primitive propagators of the gospel, their peculiar elevation of spirit, and sanctity of character, and success in exertion; and what is it which has produced the eminent piety and extensive usefulness of uninspired ministers, of more recent periods, and of our own day, but the copious effusion of divine influences—the unction of the Holy Spirit? Let then the minister of the sanctuary daily and earnestly ask it, and he shall receive it; let him perseveringly seek it, and he shall obtain the heavenly gift; for "if we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children, much more will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." Let the young minister reflect much on the habits of communion with God which distinguished David and Daniel and Paul. Let him consult the biography of the most eminent christians and the most useful ministers. Let him trace the admirable alliance and intimate affinity of intellectual effort and devotional dependance. Let him remember that at one period of his life the ever-active Luther devoted three hours in the day to the duty and

delights of prayer. Let him think of such men as Dr. Cotton Mather, who in the midst of his multifarious and arduous engagements as a pastor and an author, retired six times every day for the purpose of communion with God; and although he may not feel the necessity of strictly imitating their example, let him at least endeavour to imbibe their devotional spirit.

XXIV.

Guard against Levity of Spirit and Demeanour.

There have been times and sects, in which among many christian ministers, gravity frequently approximated to austerity, and sometimes even to moroseness. Deeply to be regretted were such tendencies, because they presented to the world an unamiable and repulsive, and therefore an incorrect exhibition of the religion of Jesus Christ. This is not however an evil against which it is particularly necessary to caution the young ministers of the present day. It is the opposite tendency which is often too powerfully operative. It is not always kept in mind, that the office of Pastor and Teacher in the church of Christ is a grave office, and that its duties are from their very nature grave and serious, involving both on the part of the minister and of the hearers, the most awful and momentous responsibility. They "who watch for souls as those who must give an account," must surely appear out of character, whenever they are found chargeable with inconsiderate levity. There is an obvious and palpable incongruity in this, which cannot fail to strike the observer, and to lessen the degree of that moral influence of incalcula-

ble value, which the character and deportment of a minister should empower him to exert over the minds of his hearers. *Who* can calculate the degree in which the impression of discourses from the pulpit is, on the one hand, deepened, or, on the other, enfeebled, by the estimate which the hearer almost unconsciously forms of the character of the preacher? *Who* can determine the extent to which the materials which enter into that estimate are derived from the hours of social and unbending intercourse? Let those hours be illumined by the smile of christian cheerfulness, benignity, and urbanity: let the manners of him who "ministers in holy things," recommend him to the more refined; let his conversation command the respect of the more intelligent; let his kindness endear him to the young; but let there be no utterance of the heart, no indication of feeling which, if remembered in the sanctuary, would diminish the effect of the truth proceeding from his lips. Let it be the resolution of every one who enters on the engagements of the christian ministry, that, relying on the aids and succours of heavenly grace, he will never counteract in the parlour the effect of addresses from the pulpit. Let him indeed aim at something more than this negative character of social intercourse; and difficult as is the attempt, and rare as is the attainment, and frequent as may be his regret at failure, let him devotionally and diligently cultivate the habit enjoined by the Apostle—"Let your conversation be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that it may minister grace to the hearers."

XXV.

Cherish the strictest Purity of Thought, of Sentiment, and of Demeanour.

The holy Apostle, when writing to the holy Evangelist, towards whom he cherished the strongest attachment and the firmest confidence, deemed it important to say, with paternal solicitude,—"Flee also youthful lusts." Your safety, when exposed to temptations of this character, lies in flight—speedy and determined and unhesitating flight. "Take the first hint from conscience," and let her warning voice be to thee as the voice of God. Over the regions of imagination, which open so many avenues to the heart, exercise the strictest vigilance, that not even a thought may linger or hover there which could be subsequently traced by the slightest vestige of contamination. If this be your daily care, it will be easy to act under the advice thus administered by the venerable Abraham Booth. "Guard habitually against every appearance of imprudent and indelicate familiarity, even with the most virtuous and pious of your female friends. It is not even sufficient that conscience bears witness to the purity of your conduct, and the piety of your motives; for in matters of so delicate a nature, there should not be the leat shadow of a ground, either to support suspicion, or to excite surmise. There is need for us to watch and pray against the greatest sins—even against those to which, perhaps, we never perceived ourselves to be much inclined.—Of late," continues this exemplary minister,

in a Pastoral Charge, "I have been much affected by the following reflection :—Though, if not greatly deceived, I have had some degree of experimental acquaintance with Jesus Christ for almost forty years; though I have borne the ministerial character for upwards of twenty-five years; though I have been, perhaps of some little use in the church of God; and though I have had a greater share of esteem among religious people than I had any reason to expect; yet, after all, it is possible for me, in one single hour of temptation to blast my character—to ruin my public usefulness—and to render my warmest christian friends ashamed of owning me. Hold thou me up, O Lord, and I shall be safe! Ah, brother, there is little reason for any of us to be high-minded; and therefore, happy is the man that feareth always."

XXVI.

Cultivate, and display, the most delicate sense of Honour, in all the intercourses of Life.

In estimating the confidence which we are authorized to repose in the honour of any individual, we are accustomed to take into view the rank he holds in society—the occupation in which he is engaged—the education he originally received—the habits of feeling induced by his pursuits and his connexions, and, above all, the principles and sentiments with which his mind is imbued. If then we feel justified in placing dependence on the honour of a religious tradesman, of a christian merchant—of one who combines the feelings of a

gentleman with the feelings of a christian; of what character ought to be the honour of a christian minister? Ought it not to be characterized by the nicest and most unsullied delicacy? Ought it not to be elevated far above the slightest ground of suspicion? Ought it not to inspire with the firmest confidence every friend, every relative, every neighbour, every hearer? Ought it not to diffuse around the minister of truth an atmosphere, in which friendship can freely breathe, and slander scarcely live? Ought not the public teacher of religion to be a man "of good report among them that are without," and still more among them that are within the church? Ought he not to afford a beauteous and an attractive exemplification of "whatever things are true, and whatever things are honourable, and whatever things are just, and whatever things are pure, and whatever things are lovely, and whatever things are of good report?"

From the commencement, then, to the termination of his pastoral career, let the christian minister display the most exquisite and unimpeachable honour. Let him be solicitous to redeem every pledge he has ever given, in public or in private. Let the confidential disclosures and communications poured into his private ear, and entrusted to his safe-keeping, be as secure from currency as before he was in possession of the confided statements. Let character and property and every valued deposit find in him a sanctuary far remote from all danger of spoliation. Let it be impossible for any, without the utmost perverseness of intellect, or the grossest injustice of representation, to ascribe to him

any injury affecting their fortunes, their families, or their reputation. Let the purest honour, guided by a conscience void of offence and enlightened by the Word of God, regulate his domestic economy—the settlement of all his pecuniary and secular transactions—and every form and species of his intercourse with his family, with his flock, and with society at large.

If in every degree of social intercourse the christian minister should act on principles of honour, how inexpressibly important is it, that these principles should regulate all approximations to intimacy with individuals of the other sex, and especially such as may involve the tenderest and the strongest affections of the heart. "Some young ministers," it is observed by the author of the valuable 'Sketches of Human Nature,' "by paying particular attentions to young women, have led them to suppose, that they really intended to ask them in marriage, and yet when they had it in their power to marry, have paid their addresses to others! The folly, however, (and in many cases the criminality, with which they were thus chargeable) has usually been followed by its own punishment. Their comfort has been greatly marred, by the consciousness of having most unguardedly trifled with the affections of one, whom they had reason to esteem; and their usefulness has been impaired, by the story of such an attachment going abroad, while, perhaps in the course of its circulation, many circumstances of aggravation are added, to establish the charge of cruelty and unfaithfulness. Let then christian ministers be especially on their guard against any language which can be fairly

construed, as expressive of peculiar partiality, where they have no such meaning; and where they are engaged, let the thought of every other individual be at once most entirely dismissed from their minds!" To act a contrary part is basely to trample on all the laws of honour both human and divine, and to forfeit all right and title to the appellation of a man of honour both in the church and in the world.

XXVII.

Remember the pre-eminent importance of Prudence and Discretion.

Dr. Campbell has the following remarks in his Lectures on the Pastoral Character. "The ancient saying, 'Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia,' has a very important meaning. It holds also in the converse, 'Nullum numen adest, ni sit prudentia.' Or to give a christian turn to the sentiment, we may say, Every virtue will attain its end, when conducted by prudence; as, on the contrary, No virtue will answer its end, where prudence is wanting to direct it. Is not the same lesson, in effect, taught us, in more emphatic terms, by our blessed Lord, where he commands us to join the wisdom of the serpent to the innocence of the dove? As the latter is necessary for preserving the former from degenerating into low cunning and artifice, so the former is necessary to serve the latter both as a guide and as a guard."

If there be any one profession or situation in life, in which more than in all others, prudence is essential,

and in which more than in all others, indiscretion is prejudicial, it is unquestionably that of the christian minister. He has intercourse with men of all classes, of all prejudices, and of all habits. He finds in every one of them a keen-eyed observer of his temper and conduct; but by no means in every one of them a kind or a christian observer. He finds not a few arrogating to themselves the right of arraigning at the tribunal of their judgment, not only his public discourses, and his public conduct, but all his habits, all his plans, all his visits, and all his expressions. In the hours of social intercourse, amid the numerous recitals of the actions and the words of others, he is often appealed to for an opinion; and that opinion, if ingenuously and unguardedly expressed, may itself be again and again employed as an instrument of incalculable evil, working dissension and alienation in the minds of those against whom it may be directed without the knowledge or intention of the speaker himself. "What manner of person then ought he to be in all holy conversation and godliness," and in all discretion and prudence; constantly on his guard to avoid even the slightest appearance of evil. How much he needs the knowledge of his own heart —the knowledge of human nature in all its leading and characteristic varieties—and that degree of the knowledge of the world, which is to be attained without contracting its defilement! How much he needs the sustaining influence of that conscious rectitude of principle, which will elevate him above the depressing influence of 'idle words' and 'hard speeches;' and at the same time how much he needs that christian circum-

spection which will preserve him from offending even in word, against the rules of the strictest propriety and the most delicate decorum! Far be it from him to make the slightest approach to those slight and almost undefined boundaries, which separate imprudence from impropriety, and impropriety from criminality. With a humble and a prayerful mind, let him seek from the "Giver of every good and perfect gift," the grace by which "in all things he may adorn the doctrine of his God and Saviour."

XXVIII.

Study and display that Courtesy, which is the essence of true Politeness.

There is much of truth and beauty in the following remarks of the late Dr. Tho*. Brown, of Edinburgh. "Politeness, in all its most important respects, is nothing more than *the knowledge of the human mind directing general benevolence.* It is the art of producing the greatest happiness, which, in the mere external courtesies of life, *can* be produced; by raising such ideas or feelings in the minds of those with whom we are conversant, as will afford the most pleasure; and averting, as much as possible, every idea which may lead to pain. It implies, therefore, when perfect, a fine knowledge of the natural series of thoughts, so as to distinguish, not merely the thought which will be the *immediate* or *near* effect of what is said or done, but those which may arise still *more remotely;* and he is

the most successful in this art of giving happiness, who sees the future at the greatest distance."

That courtesy which true philosophy assists us to acquire, true religion commands us to display. "Be pitiful; be courteous"—are injunctions of apostolic authority; and a practical regard to these precepts is of no small importance in the discharge of the christian ministry. Its object is to open the minds of men to receive and embrace the truth. The minister of the gospel is the advocate who pleads the cause of truth, and endeavours, by reasoning and persuasion, to overcome the proud reluctance of the human mind, to admit its humbling doctrines and sin-opposing precepts. Shall the pleader then, at the *bar* of the human mind, set at defiance the *laws* of the human mind; and instead of conciliating, by the kindness and courtesy of his address, shall he deepen prejudice, by all that has the aspect of being coarse and rude and vulgar and unfeeling? Is it the part of wisdom or of goodness, to inspire the disgust of those who are distinguished by education and refinement; or to counteract, by cold repulsiveness of manners, in the hour of *social intercourse*, the effect produced by the display of talent, of fidelity, or of earnestness, in the hour of *public worship*? Will the christian minister rise in reputation, or advance in the acquisition of moral influence, by being deemed no fit companion for men of refinement, and men of family, and men of taste, and men of letters? So deemed not that accomplished advocate of the cause of Christ, who was "all things to all men, that he might by all means save some." Never was man more

deeply versed in the knowledge of the ways which lead to the human heart; and never was man more disposed, by principle and by feeling, to apply that knowledge to the benevolent purpose of opening the heart, even in its most hidden recesses, to the influence of the truth which saves and sanctifies. *Who* would attempt to pourtray the character of Paul—(or who would recognize the likeness, if attempted)—without the kindness and the gentleness, and the suavity and the sympathy, which he himself copied from the model of absolute perfection? Let then the young minister of the gospel of reconciliation be, in these respects, an imitator of Paul, even as Paul was an imitator of Christ!

XXIX.

Observe Punctuality in all your engagements.

If a man were to spend his days in perfect seclusion, he would still be a gainer by the habit of regularity, in the distribution of his pursuits; but its importance obviously increases with the extent of his connexions, and the number of his engagements. If regularity be that which a man owes to himself, punctuality is that which he owes to others. "Appointments," observes Mr. Cecil, "become debts; I owe you punctuality, if I have made an appointment with you; and have no right to throw away your time, if I do my own. Punctuality is important, because it subserves the peace and good temper of a family: the want of it not only infringes on necessary duty, but sometimes excludes the duty. Punctuality is important, as it gains time: it

is like packing things in a box; a good packer will get in half as much more as a bad one.—The calmness of mind which it produces is another advantage of punctuality: a disorderly man is always in a hurry; he has no time to speak with you, because he is going elsewhere; and when he gets there, he is too late for his business, or he must hurry away to another before he can finish it. It was a wise maxim of the Duke of Newcastle—'I do one thing at a time.'—Punctuality gives weight to character. 'Such a man has made an appointment; then I know he will keep it.' And this generates punctuality in you; for like other virtues, it propagates itself."

If these pointed and judicious remarks are applicable to men of every profession and occupation; if they are important to the man of business, and to the man of letters, they are of still greater importance to the christian minister. If he would consult his own tranquillity; if he would be an economist of invaluable time; if he would do justice to his sacred engagements; if he would advance in the esteem and confidence of his numerous connexions; let him, although without excessive and over-anxious preciseness, pay due regard to the claims of punctuality.

XXX.

Do not hastily abandon a Station of Usefulness, in which you have acquired a Moral Influence.

"Influence," says Mr. Cecil, "whether derived from money, talents, or connexions, is Power. Who-

ever neglects or misapplies this power, is an unprofitable servant.—Even men of feeble public talents may acquire much influence, by kindness and consistency of character. Ministers are defective, in resting their personal influence too much on their public ministry: time will give weight to a man's character; and it is one advantage to a man, to be cast early into his situation, that he may earn a character." If these remarks are just, as undoubtedly they are, then, by abandoning a station where useful influence has been gradually attained, a minister makes the costly sacrifice of no small portion of these earnings of many years. It is not the whole, nor perhaps the greater part of that influence, which he can reasonably expect to transfer to another station. It is an influence over minds of various orders, which, by his ministry, he has trained; and those minds are better prepared, and more fully disposed, to receive benefit by *his* ministrations, than by those of any other man, although more splendidly gifted than himself. It is an influence arising from continued intercourse; emanating from the growth of character, and receiving constant accessions of strength from reciprocities of kindness. By removing to other scenes, and other connexions, these advantages are, in a great degree, surrendered; and the minister who thus transfers his services to another, and a distant sphere of exertion, places himself, in some respects, in circumstances of retrogradation, and has to recommence the work which had been previously far advanced. These remarks are not made with a view to intimate, that a change of station is, in no instances, justifiable; but

with a view to urge the most cautious and deliberate consideration, in weighing the *certain* disadvantages against the *probable* benefits of the change. That change is unquestionably to be avoided as an evil, which does not reasonably authorize the expectation of a decided preponderance of good.

THE END.

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